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A Knight of the Range

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By Stephen Angus Cox

CHAPTER I.
A KNIGHT NEEDED.

"I DON'T aim to influence your decision none, ma'am, but thar's uh big prairie fire comin' this way fast as uh bronk kin run, an' the best place for yuh, I'm thinkin', is at home. Whar d'yuh live, ef I may be so bold as to ask?"

Helen Ormsby, teacher of the school on Biggsby's Knoll, in the Valley of the Big Horn River in northern Wyoming, gave a start and looked around in amazement. She was seated on a large stone, a mile from the schoolhouse, down in the valley, sketching. From this point she could get a splendid view of the Shoshone Range of Mountains, a few miles to the westward, and as Helen Ormsby was an artist as well as a schoolma'am, she was usually busy sketching, when not teaching the children of the ranchers of the vicinity to read, write, spell, and do sums in arithmetic. Miss Ormsby had been a resident of this locality for only two weeks, so did not know many people, and the tall, bronzed, and handsome fellow she saw standing near, and who had evidently uttered the words that had startled her, was a stranger.

A quick glance across the valley showed her that he had spoken the truth. A prairie fire was burning briskly less than a mile distant, and it was evidently coming straight toward the point where she sat.

Helen Ormsby rose to her feet, at the same time saying: "Thank you, sir, for your warning. I was so busily engaged sketching, that I would not have seen the fire until it was close upon me, doubtless. I will gather up my sketching materials and go home at once."

"You won't lose no time in any such foolish way, ma'am," was the decided reply. "Thet fire'll be here in a jiffy, an' yuh couldn' get to your home afoot nohow. Yuh'll have to ride with me on Thunderbolt, here," indicating his horse, which stood near. "We'll have to hurry, too, ma'am, er we'll sure get singed some."

Helen Ormsby's eyes flashed. She did not realize the danger, being new to the country, nor did she relish being told what she must do. This was what she insisted on doing, as a rule—telling others what to do. As teacher, it worked very well with the children, but she could hardly hope to have the same success with this bronzed knight of the range. At the same time, neither should he tell her what she should do. So she calmly started to gather up her sketching material, as she had said she would do.

The cowboy frowned slightly, gave one glance at the woman, and then one at the oncoming fire, and quickly strode to his horse and vaulted into the saddle. Without ceremony or more words he guided his horse close to the young woman, who was gathering up her brushes and other materials, and reaching down, he seized her around the waist with his left arm and lifted her as if she were a child and seated her in front of him, in the hollow between his body and the horn of the saddle. Then, at a word from his lips, the horse dashed away at a swift gallop. Not an instant too soon, either, for the fire, coming with the speed of the wind, was only a hundred yards behind them.

So amazed was Helen Ormsby by the action of the cowboy that she let go of her sketching materials, and brushes and paints were scattered amid the grass, to be converted into charred remains a few minutes later by the fire. Still unaware of the danger to which she had been exposed and from which she had been rescued, unwillingly on her part, the young woman struggled with all her might, and even struck the cowboy blows with her clenched hand, at the same time crying angrily:

"Let me down, sir, at once! What do you mean by such unwarranted action? You will be sorry for this high-handed proceeding!"

"Look behind us, ma'am," replied the cowboy, in a calm, even voice.

Miss Ormsby obeyed, and when she saw the great wall of flame, twenty feet in height, writhing, swirling, leaping almost at the heels of the galloping horse, she gave utterance to an exclamation of amazement and terror.

"Thar's a big prairie fire comin'!"

"Goodness!" she cried. "How—did—that fire—get so—close?"

"It's travelin' at the rate uv uh mile uh minute—purty nigh," was the cool response; "an' ef I had waited for yuh to gather up your paintin' traps, yuh'd sure have got scorched, ma'am. I beg your pardon for grabbin' yuh so kind uh sudden-like, but I didn't have no time to explain matters, yuh see."

"I see—now," was the reply. "Goodness, can—we—escape, do—you—think?"

"If Thunderbolt don't step in uh gopher-hole, I guess we'll make uh getaway, all right," was the cool reply. "Jest set quiet an' hold tight, ma'am ef yuh please."

Helen Ormsby did "set quiet an' hold tight," as instructed. Indeed, she gripped the cowboy with nervous strength, and with her face turned to the rear, and all unconsciously to her, pressed tightly against the bronzed cheek of her rescuer, she gazed back at the pursuing fire-fiend and kept the cowboy informed of its nearness.

"You're leaving it behind!" she exclaimed, presently. "I believe we are going to escape. If you could turn aside, now, and let it pass us, we would be all right."

"That's just what I'm goin' to do, ma'am," was the reply. "I guess Thunderbolt's good for et."

He did not turn sharp to one side, but rode away diagonally, and in about twenty minutes was out of the track of the fire, which went racing and roaring past them, and swept onward into the distance, going fortunately in a direction where there did not happen to be any ranch-houses.

"It'll stop when it strikes the crick, likely," said the cowboy. "I guess thar won't be no great amount uh damage done."

Suddenly Helen Ormsby realized that she was in the arms of a big, bronzed stranger, a cowboy, a knight of the rangeland, and the blood mounted to her forehead, and she exclaimed, in rather a confused manner:

"Please let—me—down, sir. I—I'm not—not very—comfortable."

"Yuh're more comfortable than ef yuh had got caught by that fire, I take it, ma'am," was the reply. "Whar yuh stoppin'? Yuh're the new teacher up at the knoll, ain't yuh? Who you stayin' with?"

"I'm boarding at the home of Mr. Boggs," replied Helen; "but I—want—down. I can walk there." This last with some hauteur.

"It's easier an' quicker to ride," was the calm reply. "An' I guess yuh can stand et to stay whar yuh are till we git to Boggs's. I know I can stand et to have yuh thar. On with yuh, Thunderbolt. We must get the teacher home as quickly as possible."

Forward leaped the horse, and galloped onward, the cowboy still holding the slender form of the schoolma'am in the hollow of his strong left arm. And Helen Ormsby, feeling herself helpless in this strong grasp, did not make any attempt to free herself. Nor did she utter any further protest, for she intuitively realized that this calm giant of the range would pay no attention to her words.

The Boggs ranch-house was reached presently, and the cowboy placed the young woman on her feet in front of the gate, after which he said, coolly:

"When yuh are out paintin', hereafter, ma'am, I'd take a look aroun' at the scenery once in a while, ef I was you. Maybe I might not be thar, next time, to snake yuh out uh danger."

A sudden feeling of discomfiture came over the young woman, and she cried im-

pulsively. "I hope you won't be. You are too—too—self-assertive, to authoritative to suit me!"

"That's me, every time, ma'am," with sober calmness. "I aim to be boss, whenever thar's anythin' much doin', an' that's a fact. So long, ma'am. Hope yuh'll see things different an' be in a better humor next time we meet."

"I hope we won't meet again!" Helen cried, though as she spoke the words, she knew in her heart that she was not speaking the truth. But she was vexed, and yielded to the impulse to speak in this manner to the man who had doubtless saved her from a terrible death.

"I couldn't say the same an' tell the truth, ma'am," replied the cowboy. "I hope we do meet again—an' that yuh'll be over your mad spell by that time. So long. Away yuh go, Thunderbolt," and he put spurs to his horse and dashed away like a thunderbolt, sure enough.

Helen Ormsby entered the house and told the story of her adventure to Mrs. Boggs and Lizzie, the sixteen-year-old daughter, and then she asked, with rather more of interest and eagerness than her words to the cowboy or her actions toward him would have led one to expect, what his name was.

"I forgot to ask him," she said.

"Why, that was Arthur Knight," said Lizzie. "He is the foreman of Mr. Fletcher's ranch, the Circle O. He's a fine fellow, Arthur is. All the girls around here like him."

"And I suppose he likes all the girls," said Helen.

"No, he doesn't. He don't seem to care anything about any of them, Miss Ormsby."

A peculiar, undefinable light appeared in Helen's eyes for a moment, but was not noticed by Lizzie or her mother. If it meant that the young woman was glad to hear this, her words belied the look, for she said:

"So his name is Arthur Knight, is it? Well, if I meet Mr. Knight again, I shall tell him my views regarding headstrong, self-assertive men."

"But—he saved your life, Miss Ormsby," said Lizzie, hesitatingly, but with some determination. It was evident that she liked Arthur Knight. "I think you at least ought to thank him for that."

"Well—perhaps I ought," said Helen, slowly and thoughtfully. "Yes, I'll thank him the next time I see him—if he doesn't act too—too authoritative."

"I'd thank him anyway, if it was me," said Lizzie.

Helen Ormsby made no reply.

CHAPTER II.

THE KNIGHT REAPPEARS.

Two or three days later, just after the children had gone home from the schoolhouse on the knoll, there sounded the clatter of horse's hoofs, and a man rode up to the door as Miss Ormsby emerged from the building. The rider was the tall, handsome cowboy who had saved the schoolma'am from being burned to death by the prairie fire. Bringing Thunderbolt to a stop near the door, Arthur Knight lifted his hat and bowed with all the grace that he could muster.

"Howdy, schoolma'am," he greeted, in his musically mellow voice. "How do yuh find yourself today?"

Helen Ormsby drew herself up, and returning the bow with a curt little nod, said somewhat coldly: "I am not lost, sir—cowboy."

She had come near saying "knight," but checked herself, for she did not want this stalwart, self-possessed and authoritative cowboy to think that she attributed knightly deeds to him. It was her belief that he had the "bighead," as she expressed it to herself, which was doing Arthur Knight an injustice. He was not bigoted at all, but he did have a sort of authoritative way about him, born of having for so long bossed the cowboys on the Fletcher Ranch. And to tell the truth, there was in this attitude toward the schoolma'am a bit of bravado, for secretly the big fellow stood a bit in awe of the pretty young woman. He didn't know much about women, but intuitively he did not want her to know that he held her in awe. "I wouldn't stand no show whatever with her, ef she knowed that," was his thought, and in thinking thus he had unconsciously sized up the matter just about right, for Helen Ormsby was a young woman who would have to feel the hand of a master before she would succumb. And to one whom she could dominate, she would have been something of a tryant.

Arthur Knight eyed the schoolma'am speculatively, his keen gray eyes taking in her graceful form and ending with a level challenge into the brown orbs of the young woman.

"Oh, yuh ain't lost, hey?" he grinned, after a few moments. "Well, yuh come mighty nigh bein' lost the other day, Miss—ah—h'm—Miss—" He paused and looked at the teacher expectantly. He knew her name, but wanted to pretend that he had not had curiosity enough regarding her, after having saved her life, the other day, to find out what her name was.

"You've missed it twice," said Helen, calmly; "try again and perhaps you will hit it."

The cowboy's idea of humor was struck by this remark, and he threw his head back and laughed till the gophers that had been sitting on little mounds near by, watching the pair and listening, turned back somersaults into their little caves of refuge in startled amazement.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Knight, doubling over in his mirth. "Ho, ho, ho! Say, you are sure the funny one, Miss—Helen Ormsby. Say, did I hit it that time, schoolma'am?" And then he roared again, causing the gophers, that had just crept back and were peeping out at the mounted giant of the range, to retreat again in great haste.

Helen Ormsby drew herself up and gave the cowboy a look that was intended to have a congealing effect on the recipient and put a stop to his mirth.

"If you are laughing at me, Mr. Arthur Knight," she said, in cold, measured accents, "I would advise you to cease at once. I have seen lots of people, and in my work of teaching have had to go about in the world and be exposed to numerous not exactly pleasing experiences, but this is the first time in my life that I was ever laughed at."

The cowboy managed to stop laughing, now, and a sober and earnest expression took the place of the mirthful look.

"Why, bless your life, schoolma'am," he said, "I wasn't laughing at you. Not a bit of it. I was laughing at what you said. You said it so funny, I jest couldn't help laughin', an' that's a fact. I hope you'll forgive me, Miss Ormsby, I sure do. I didn't mean any disrespect, none whatever, which same yuh ought to know, Miss Ormsby. We cowboys may be a bit rough, and—and—uncouth, I s'pose yuh'd put it, but we sure don't aim to insult women-folks none, an' I hope yuh'll believe me when I say it."

"Oh, very well, I'll excuse your action, this time, but don't let it happen again," said Helen, coolly, and with the air of addressing one of her pupils. "Good afternoon, Mr. Knight."

The cowboy leaped to the ground, and hooking his arm through the bridle-rein, fell in beside the young woman as she started down the trail toward the Boggs' ranch-house.

"I ain't in any hurry," he said, calmly; "an' so I guess I'll jest walk down the path alongside yuh, schoolma'am."

"Hadn't you better wait till you are asked?" queried Miss Ormsby, giving the cowboy a look that was intended to have a squelching effect. It failed, however, for he merely grinned and replied:

"Well, it's up to yuh to ask me, then, schoolma'am, fur I'm sure goin' to walk down the trail a piece with yuh."

"I guess I can get home safely," said Helen, coldly, adding, after a glance around her, "I don't see any prairie fire raging, this afternoon."

"Well one might start at any moment," retorted the cowboy. "I know yuh'll feel safer and more comfortable with me along, an' I'm one uh the most accommodatin' chaps in the world. I really don't mind walkin' down to Boggs's with yuh, Miss Ormsby. Et ain't very much bother."

"Oh, isn't it indeed?" said Helen. "Well, if I were to tell you what I think of your impudence, I believe you would not care to walk any further with me."

"Then don't tell me, Miss Ormsby, fur I've set my mind on walkin' to Boggs's with yuh, an' when I set my mind on a thing, I generally do." The look he gave Helen as he said this was a peculiar one, and somehow she got the idea that he wanted her to understand that he had set his mind on winning her and did not intend to be balked. The red blood mounted to her temples, and then receded as quickly, leaving her pale by contrast. Feeling almost angry because of the effect his words and look had had on her, she said sharply:

"I do believe that you are the most impudent fellow that I have ever encountered, Arthur Knight! I didn't ask you to walk with me, but I am going to ask you not to do so. Kindly mount your horse and go about your business, sir, if you have any. I am aware that I owe you thanks for saving my life the other day, but even that fact will not justify me in putting up with so much insolence. Will you go?"

The cowboy, somewhat surprised, stared at the young woman for a few moments, and then said slowly:

"Why, fur yuh really mean et, schoolma'am, uh course I'll go. I sure don't aim to intrude none."

"Well, that is certainly what you are doing, whether you intend it or not. Good afternoon, Mr. Knight."

"Oh, all right," climbing into the saddle and looking down at the young woman with a somewhat quizzical expression on his face. "I'll go, Miss Ormsby, uh course, bein' as yuh insist on it, but—I'll come again!" And putting spurs to his horse, he rode down the trail with a great clatter, as if he had suddenly thought of some business that needed attending to in a great hurry.

"Schoolma'am's nature a hard person to get along with," murmured the cowboy. "Yuh can't never tell how she's goin' to take yuh, or what yuh say. She sure flares up sudden-like, when a feller ain't expectin' it none. Well, no matter. She can't bluff me, an' seein' as how I've took a shine to her an' she shows fight, why I'll either be her or she'll throw me—an' I don't aim to let her do that, not if I know myself, an' I think I do."

CHAPTER III.

HELEN'S NEW PUPIL.

Arthur Knight was away at the most distant part of the Fletcher ranch for a week after the meeting and sudden parting with Helen Ormsby, and had he known it, this was the most fortunate thing that could have happened, for as the days rolled by, without his reappearance, the schoolma'am grew restless and at times was peevish, her pupils thought. They could not understand it, though two or three of the older ones guessed that the teacher was lonesome.

"She ain't very well acquainted yet," said one.

Try as she might, Helen Ormsby could not get the big, handsome, self-assertive cowboy out of her mind. She had seen lots of men, but had never before seen one that caused her a moment's unrest. Could it be that she was in love with Arthur Knight? Helen asked herself this question, but was unable to answer it. She did not really believe she was in love with him, however, but she could not deny that she was interested in him—deeply enough interested so that his absence bothered her and caused her to experience a vague feeling of unrest, as if something that would make her life more satisfactory and pleasant were lacking.

She did not know what had become of the cowboy, and she would not ask, for she did not want to betray enough interest in him to make inquiries. No, she would simply wait for him to come again. He had said he would do so, and somehow Helen had faith that he was a man who would keep his word. And then as she remembered that he had said that when he decided to do a thing, he usually did it, she also recalled the look with which he had accompanied the words, and how she had interpreted the look to mean that he had made up his mind to win her, and had wished her to understand this, and that he would succeed. A thrill, unmistakably of pleasure, went over her as she thought of this. Yes, there could be no doubt that the self-assertive, authoritative cowboy had aroused a peculiar feeling of interest in her heart. It was hardly love, Helen told herself, but that it might easily grow into love the young woman realized—and the realization did not dismay her. Indeed it was a source of secret pleasure.

The work at the distant point on the Fletcher ranch kept Arthur Knight longer than he had expected. He was away all of one week, and until the middle of the next, and Helen would have about come to the conclusion that she would never see him again, had it not been that she learned his whereabouts on Monday of the second week of his absence. On this day she had a new pupil—twelve-year-old Katie Fletcher, daughter of Arthur Knight's employer. Katie had been sick with fever during the first weeks of the school, and this was the reason she had not been attending, as she explained to the teacher, who, when she learned who the little girl was, surprised the child somewhat by the kindly warmth of her welcome. Helen would not have acknowledged it even to herself, doubtless, but it was a fact that a thrill of delight went over her when she learned that this little girl was the daughter of the employer of her knight of the range.

When recess-time came, under pretense of being interested solely in the little girl, Helen asked a goodly number of questions about the sick spell that had kept Katie out of school, and of course it was natural that the teacher should ask about Katie's parents, etc., and by dint of guiding the conversation a bit, Helen was enabled to learn that Arthur Knight was away at a distant point on the ranch, working, but that he was expected to be back by the middle of the week.

Helen again surprised Katie by kissing her, which action she accounted for on the score of sympathy because of the little girl's late illness, making some remark to this effect for the benefit of those of the pupils who witnessed the act. Katie Fletcher, however, was wise far beyond her years. Although only a little past twelve years of age, she was possessed of almost a woman's intuition, and she remembered how the teacher had guided the conversation around to the employes of the ranch, and how she had listened with deepest interest when Arthur Knight's name had been mentioned, and as she had heard Arthur Knight speak of the teacher several times, and how he had saved her from being burned to death by the prairie fire, Katie put two and two together, and made up her mind that Helen Ormsby was interested in the big, handsome cowboy.

Possibly Katie, while gifted with almost a woman's intuition was possessed of another womanly attribute, that of jealousy, for she loved Arthur Knight with all the strength of her immature little heart. Arthur Knight had been on the Fletcher ranch ever since Katie was a baby, and had played with her, petted her, and spoiled her as only a big-hearted man can pet and spoil a little one that he fancies. Katie's will was law with Arthur Knight, and it would have opened Helen Ormsby's eyes to have been a witness to the meek and submissive attitude of the giant cowboy toward this little girl—this impudent cowboy whose attitude toward her was the personification of self-assertiveness and authority. But then, Arthur Knight looked upon Katie the same as if she were a dearly-loved little sister, while as regards Helen Ormsby—well, she could never be a sister to him! Hence the difference in his attitude toward Katie and Helen.

Katie Fletcher was thenceforward a close observer of Helen Ormsby and a keen critic. She noted carefully all that the teacher said and did, and gradually she became possessed of a good understanding of the real nature of Miss Ormsby—or at any rate Katie believed that she understood the young woman pretty thoroughly. And she became confident, as the days rolled by, that the teacher was very greatly interested in Arthur Knight. But was Arthur as deeply interested in Helen Ormsby? Katie asked herself this question, and was unable to answer it, and the inability to do so and the fear that the answer in case she could do so would be in the affirmative made her very unhappy.

"Arthur loves me," she would whisper when alone. "I don't want him to love anybody but me! I don't want him to love Miss Ormsby. I'm sure he doesn't love her! I know he loves me, and he couldn't love us both at the same time." She said this to herself over and over again, trying to drive out the suspicion, the nameless fear that Arthur might indeed love Miss Ormsby, or learn to do so.

When Arthur Knight returned to the ranch, Katie was among the first to greet him, and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. The big cowboy laughed joyously, and giving the little girl a kiss in return, asked as he set her down:

"Are you glad to see me, little one?"

"Yes, Arthur," was the reply. "I'm very, very glad to see you. You know that; but, Arthur, I'm going to ask a favor of you. You'll grant it, won't you?"

"Uh course I will, little girl. Yuh bet I will! Anything that Katie Fletcher says goes with Arthur Knight, every time; an' anything yuh want, yuh're goin' to have, little girl, if I kin get it for yuh."

"Oh, Arthur, you're so good!" cried Katie, her face beaming with happiness. "Well, I want that you shall not call me 'little girl' any more, Arthur. I'm not so very little, as you see," drawing herself up to her fullest height, "and—and—I'm growing fast, Arthur, and before so very long I'll be a great big girl, like—like Miss Ormsby."

Arthur Knight gave a start at mention of Helen Ormsby's name, which fact did not escape the keen eyes of the child, and she said to herself, with a queer feeling of pain tugging at her heart, "I'm afraid he does like her."

"So yuh want to grow up an' be a big girl like Miss Ormsby, do yuh?" laughed Knight. "An' yuh don't want me to call yuh 'little girl' any more? All right, lit—I mean Katie. I'll not call yuh 'little girl' any more, ef yuh don't want me to. I'll call yuh Katie."

"No, don't call me 'Katie'," persisted the little girl. "That's the name for a child, and I'm not a child. Call me Kate, Arthur, won't you?"

"Sure I will, lit—I mean Kate," said Knight, "and here's to seal the agreement," taking her in his arms and kissing her. "Now, henceforth and forever yuh're Kate to me, Kate—unless yuh find some other name yuh'd rather have me call yuh. What yuh say goes with me, every time."

"Thank you, Arthur," said Katie, returning the kiss, and then she went to her room, and sitting down, pondered quite a while. She was trying to settle in her mind the question as to whether Arthur Knight liked the schoolma'am. This she was unable to do satisfactorily, and sighing, she dismissed the matter for the present, but she was determined that she would keep close watch on Arthur and Helen Ormsby. She felt certain that she would soon know the truth regarding the matter.

"But what will I do if I find that Arthur likes Miss Ormsby?" she murmured. "I—I—don't believe I could stand that!" and she gazed long and thoughtfully out of the window. A casual observer, seeing her, would have thought she was looking with interest at the Shoshone Mountains, which loomed up only a few miles to the westward, but the truth was that she did not see them at all. What she did see was wholly within her mind's eye, and it was the handsome, manly face of Arthur Knight.

And at the same time another person was gazing out of the window of a little frame schoolhouse, gazing toward the Shoshone range of mountains, yet not seeing them, even though she was an artist—seeing, in fact, only the handsome, manly face of a giant cowboy, a knight of the range.

"I wonder if he'll come?" the woman presently murmured. "Katie said he would be home this afternoon."

CHAPTER IV.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

Helen Ormsby waited at least an hour after the close of school, and Arthur Knight did not put in an appearance. Disappointed, though she would not acknowledge it even to herself, Helen left the schoolhouse and made her way slowly down to the Boggs home, where she was more silent than was usual with her, answering the lively chatter of Lizzie Boggs in monosyliables, and sometimes not at all.

To tell the truth, Arthur Knight had intended to ride around to the schoolhouse about the time school let out, but there was some work that had needed his attention, and he had been unable to

get away. The fact that he had not been at the schoolhouse when school let out was as great a disappointment to him as it had been to Helen, but of course Helen had no means of knowing this. Nor did Arthur know that Helen had felt disappointment because of his non-appearance.

Next day Helen managed to learn that Arthur Knight had really returned, without having to ask Katie outright if such was the case, and saw she delayed leaving the schoolhouse when the children had gone, that afternoon, the same as on the afternoon before.

This time she was not disappointed, for presently she heard the hoof-beats of a horse coming at a gallop, and a few moments later Arthur Knight, looking as debonair and handsome as ever reined up in front of the little frame building, and doffed his hat to the young woman, who, strange to say! was coming out of the door just as he arrived.

"Howdy, schoolma'am," said Knight, with his most graceful bow. "I hope I find yuh well, this afternoon."

"Oh, yes, I'm feeling quite well, thank you," replied Helen, coolly. "Lovely weather we are having Mr. Knight."

"H-m—yes; fine weather, Miss Ormsby. Beautiful—weather."

He paused a few moments after saying "beautiful" and looked at Helen so significantly that she could not help but interpret the word as being applied to her, and she colored up and looked somewhat confused.

"You've been away quite a while," she said quickly, to hide her confusion.

"Yes, so I have," was the reply. "It has seemed like a month to me, an' I'm glad it seemed long to yuh, Miss Ormsby. I'm real glad to know yuh missed me some."

Helen Ormsby drew herself up and said with a dignified air: "You are quite mistaken in assuming that I missed you, Mr. Knight. If my words led you to draw that conclusion, I am sorry I spoke them."

Knight leaped to the ground, and facing the young woman, said, half-seriously and half-jestingly:

"Say, yuh're sure good at pestering a fellow, Miss Ormsby. Yuh ain't willin' to let a chap feel serene an' kind uh easy in his mind at all. I sure thought, when Katie told me thet yuh had been kind uh askin' about me—whar I was an' when I'd be back, yuh know—thet yuh was some interested in me."

"Did Katie tell you that?" cried Helen, her eyes flashing. "If she did, she—storied, and that's all there is to it!"

A flush came to Knight's face, and for an instant there was a flash in his eyes, as he said, somewhat hastily: "Katie—I mean Kate (he remembered his promise to the little girl, and corrected himself)—wouldn't story none whatever, Miss Ormsby. She didn't say thet yuh asked right out about me, but she said yuh kind uh asked about the hands on the ranch, yuh know, an' thet yuh seemed interested when she spoke about me, thet's all. An' yuh mustn't hold nothin' ag'in Katie—I mean Kate, Miss Ormsby, an'—an'—whip her or scold her none, because she hasn't done nothin' to deserve et, none whatever."

"Look behind us, ma'am!" replied the cowboy.

"You seem to think a great deal of—Kate," said Helen Ormsby, in a voice that was almost sneering. She was displeased with herself as she spoke, but she could not help it. She was at the same time trying to analyze the feeling that had possession of her. She wondered why she felt so vexed at the little girl. She could not be jealous of Katie because Arthur Knight defended her so promptly and strenuously, for it would be absurd to be jealous of a child, she told herself. And indeed, she did not as yet feel that she thought enough of Arthur Knight to be jealous of him. She was unable to analyze her feelings, at any rate, and so answered as impulse seized her.

"I sure do think a lot uh Katie—I mean Kate," said Arthur Knight. "I've knowed her sence she was a little baby, Miss Ormsby, an' I've seen her grow up on the ranch an' have always loved her jest as if she was my own little sister. If yuh care to have the regards, the friendship, maybe yuh'd rather have me say, uh Arthur Knight, yuh'll be good to thet little—I mean to Kat-"

"I don't care anything for your regards, or your friendship, Mr. Arthur Knight," exclaimed Helen, cuttingly; "but as for Katie—I mean Kate (this correction in imitation of the cowboy being in a mocking tone)—why, I'll be good to her. Oh, yes, you need not worry on that score. And, now, I have a request to make: Don't come around here any more. I have no wish to be 'pestered' with you. Good afternoon." And with a toss of her head, Helen Ormsby swept by the cowboy and walked swiftly down the trail in the direction of the Boggs ranch-house.

Arthur Knight made no move to follow, but stood there, gazing after the young woman, a peculiar expression on his face.

"Well, what d'yuh think uh that?" he presently murmured, seemingly addressing a cute little prairie-dog that sat on its haunches on top of a little mound a few yards distant. "Schoolma'am is sure quick to get her mad up. A fellow can't say nothin' scarcely to her without raisin' a ruction. I wisn I knowed more about female wimmen, I sure do, an' then maybe I'd get aloag with her better. I couldn't stand fur her sayin' Katie—I mean Kate—storied, though, none whatever. Well, mayoe she'll get over this mad spell in a day or so, an' be in a good humor again. I guess I kin kind uh keep cases on her through Katie—Kate. She'll tell me what schoolma'am says an' how she acts."

Then with another glance at the disappearing form of the schoolma'am and a puzzled shake of the head, he mounted his horse and dashed away from the spot with much haste and clattering of hoofs on the gravel trail.

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

Who Was the Traitor?

A STORY OF FORT DESPAIR

By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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CHAPTER VIII.

HARD PRESSED.

SAYWOOD loosened his grasp upon the reins, inclined to change his course of action, but Zyra noticed and understood.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "The horses are our one hope, and we are almost up. Hold fast! We shall escape. I feel it, I know it."

It was woman's faith, strong if not logical, but to it the Lieutenant opposed only the knowledge that bullets bit, tore, killed. Master of many things, he could not see his way clear now. Meanwhile, the lead zipped, hummed, snapped at the earth. If one flying bit found a lodging-place in flesh, even that of a horse——

"Cherrily, cherrily!" cried the girl. "See! We are at the last yard."

"But there is time for you to be shot—"

"It is not so ordained. Ah-h-h!"

She breathed happily as the foremost horse, getting better footing in the field of his eyes, made a final flounder and plunged to safety. His companion followed, and Saywood leaped back and caught Zyra's arm. A bullet brushed across his wrist, leaving a red line, but without drawing blood. As the horses had floundered they now floundered, and both reached the summit. Zyra laughed aloud.

"I knew we should do it!" she exclaimed.

At that the Lieutenant eyed her the more anxiously. The tone and the laugh were alike unnatural, and he knew that the relief from nerve-racking danger was responsible for both. The reaction had come. Would she sink under the trial or again reach her former coolness?

He looked back and saw the enemy still riding, but their pace was not so rapid as before. Undoubtedly they realized that while they were climbing the ascent the fugitives would be making use of their advantage, and their hopes fell off with the new turn of the situation. But just what was the situation above?

The Lieutenant saw something like a plain, but it was a forbidding stretch. Rocks rose here and there, and chance to gallop was lacking. Swiftly studying the case he took a sharp resolution.

"I've got to check them right here!" he declared. "They must not come up at once. Stay back, Miss Cheswick!"

He flung himself down near the edge that bent below. The strangers came in a body and reached the foot of the slope.

"They've had their turn, and now it's mine!" Saywood muttered.

One of his revolvers was thrust forward and he began to use it. The little brother of death began to snap, and lead hurtled down at the outlaws. If they succeeded in climbing in the teeth of that fusillade they surely bore a charmed life.

Zyra saw and mentally applauded. She longed to go to his side and add her mite, but something held her back. Before, she had faced the bullets bravely because she discovered no other way, but that line where Saywood worked his revolver so steadily was a different thing. Her weaker element revolted from seeking peril there.

"It's all right, Miss Cheswick!" said the Lieutenant, cheerfully, as he pulled the trigger. "Nothing but a practice shoot. If they want the Government mail seriously, let them come and get it. The postoffice is open!"

He was making the lower ground too warm for comfort, and the would-be climbers lost their zeal and took to flight. One, however, stayed. Sprawling on the ground, he tried to rise and failed, whereupon he tested his voice in profane comments. It did not add to his ease of mind that his allies were riding swiftly to a safe distance.

Saywood leaped up, his gaze seeking Zyra. She smiled, and he was comforted. Her nerves had ceased to twang, and she was her old, cool self.

"Now's our time!" he declared. "We will ride on, making what speed we can. This rest was good for the horses; they have their wind back."

The fugitives swung to saddle and moved away. And across the Lieutenant's knees was the mail-bag.

Again the fact that they did not know the way was harassing. If they made a rush for safety they might go into a perplexity that would end all hope of escape. Also, as they could no longer see any of the several parties who hunted them, difficulty threatened on all sides.

For some rods they were obliged to pick their way precariously, but better footing was presently found. Still bearing east of north, they pressed on with what speed was thought safe.

"Anyhow, we have won the first round," said Zyra, breaking a silence of some minutes.

"Yes,"

"Next time I am going to be more than a lay brother. Oh! I am so chagrined that I did not use my revolver!"

"You did what was far better and more timely. Hazardous as the step was, there can be no doubt that you held back their fire for a time by taking the front position. But for that I doubt if any of us, even the horses, would ever have mounted the ascent. We have a heroine along with us."

"If so, don't mention it to her. I'm sure it will make her vain, though, as I don't know her, I cannot say positively."

The girl took a backward glance and suddenly changed her manner.

"The garrison is in sight from here. It's a long, long distance, but what do you think of a bonfire, to call for aid? There are ways to make such a fire talk in sign language to an old borderman like Captain Relford."

"Unfortunately, the outlaws are nearer, and would see the smoke first. I've considered that. Revolvers would never stand off the rush of better armed men. Our system is a silent one."

"And we may ride into the outlaw village."

"Yes."

"I don't feel quite so eager to do that as I did. Claggitt's name suddenly gives me the shivers. Why is it that that scoundrel can't be run down by the troopers? Captain Relford is skilful and scribly in earnest, but try as he does, nothing comes of it. I've suspected, before now, that Claggitt has warning of the expeditions against him."

"That implies a traitor at the post."

"There may be one there."

Saywood eyed the speaker, trying not to make his regard over-keen.

"Have you any idea who the traitor is?" he asked.

"Bless you, Mr. Saywood, no! I don't say there is one. Still, if not, how does that fellow get his warnings—or, rather, escape so neatly?"

"Have you ever mentally gone over all the people there, to see if you can hit upon the right one?"

"Now you assume that I really think one is there. I must decline to commit myself, but I heard it said, long ago, that any mystery at a Government post was a nest-egg to breed trouble."

"It's a mystery to me," replied the Lieutenant, forcing a laugh, "who my burglar was. I don't think I've ever asked you how much you saw, that night."

He studied her closely as he said it, but she did not start or show any annoyance at having the subject opened.

"All I know is that Estelle awakened me and said that there was some trouble outside. I threw on a few garments as quickly as possible, went out with her, and—well, you saw all that I saw. Accept my condolences as to your burglar, but I didn't recognize the man, not getting anything like a good look. But this is an odd subject for conversation just now, Mr. Saywood. Are we not neglecting our watchfulness?"

Perhaps they were, but the officer had been glad of a chance to have Zyra speak. She had spoken, and with frank-

ness that convinced him that she was not mixed up in the mystery. He dared not question her as to Estelle Relford.

"I am considering," he pursued, after a pause, "which one of two plans is better now. The Government mail is in jeopardy. It goes without saying that I want to hang to it to the last gasp, but I am mortal. Bullets sometimes snuff out mortality. This being so, am I wise to cling to the bag, or should I hide it while I have time?"

"Perhaps if the bag should be hidden the gang would drop the pursuit."

"Yes, and perhaps they would find the mail."

The Lieutenant shook the rein and suddenly sat up straighter.

"I'll cling to it like a bulldog!" he snapped.

"Bravo!" Zyra cried, with her old animation. "If you said secrete it I would yield to your judgment, but I can't fall in love with the idea. What I covet is chance to gallop to the post with that blessed old mail-bag hobnobbing with us like a chum. There's brain-food in the idea."

"Settled! If we go, it goes. Let me take a survey here."

The topography was favorable, and he sprang to the ground and went to where bushes fringed an elevated point thickly. Zyra had followed, and they looked together.

"I see nothing," remarked the girl.

"Confound the ravines and other depressions."

"They do hide things. Why, the gang may be within a few rods of us."

"Wait! Gaze beyond that tree that seems to hang out from the face of the black cliff. Beyond it——"

"I see. Men are riding there, but not our way."

"They plan fairly well," said Saywood, with something like angry admiration. "Those fellows constitute a hostile wing that is expected to intercept us. I am compelled to believe that they have guessed our movements, sized up the detour we are attempting. That cuts us off there."

"But if we don't go there——"

"If we ride west, aiming for Sunset Valley and its link of ranches, the obstacles will be the same, only greater. Hemmed in, Miss Zyra!"

He turned and stared at the small peaks to the north.

"That's our course!" exclaimed the girl. "What if it is the lair of the Claggitt outlaws? They will not expect so bold a move, and I've heard it said the bold gambler wins."

Saywood laughed shortly, unmusically.

"We will go north!" he declared. "Straight into the enemy's country!"

CHAPTER IX.
WHAT THEY FOUND.

Zyra's former half-reckless mood had fully returned. Often, in the past, she had envied the men who had dared danger and fought out a good fight with bullets whistling around them. Now, she rose to the occasion, and the idea of penetrating the outlaw stronghold was fascinating. Somehow, they would pull through to safety, and meanwhile the peril was something to make the blood boil like a well-fed vessel over fire. It was she who led the way back to the horses, and she bounded to the saddle before the Lieutenant could give a helping hand.

"Forward!" she exclaimed, with a bright smile.

They went, but Saywood was not in her enthusiastic mood. The step they had planned turned his mind to channels that brought his lips together in a straight line and hardened his face to severity.

It was all well enough to talk about penetrating Claggitt's lair, but he did not intend to go there. A bold push toward that region would do more to throw the pursuers off their guard than anything else, and at the proper moment a sharp swing to the west would—if successful—take them to Sunset Valley. There they would find ranches, and there, if still under pursuit, they would call upon the ranchers for help.

Once more the Lieutenant located the sun with care, and then they pushed ahead. For half a mile the way was rough and traveling slow, but after that they struck a long, level canyon and reeled off two more miles at a rapid pace. During this interval they heard and saw nothing uncommon, and as the walls of the gash they were following fell away, he began looking for a place where he could climb and obtain a view from high land. If such a view showed nothing troublesome, they would begin the decisive swing to get clear of the hills.

He explained his plan to Zyra, and both were busy with the idea, when, as the canyon curved a trifle, they suddenly rode into a valley of an acre in extent. They saw more than the valley. A campfire burned just before them, and two men sat eating a deliberate meal of savory meat. As the wind carried the smoke away Saywood had suspected nothing until he had the tale told by his eyes.

Here was where Claggitt's men were to be expected, and Saywood plucked a revolver from his belt and made ready for use, but it was a fresh surprise when one of the sitting men composedly waved a section of meat toward the riders.

"Hungry?" he asked, serenely.

It was not the challenge of hostility, and the Lieutenant's hand slowly fell. The appearance of the campers added force to the one word that had been spoken. Yet, it was puzzling.

The second camper rose, removed his hat, and bowed politely.

"Friends," he said, "I don't know how you are situated, but if we may proffer the use of our humble outfit, I beg that you will honor us by accepting it."

"If hungry, eat," added the first speaker, blandly.

It was at him Saywood had all the while been looking, and now he urged his horse forward abruptly.

"Unless you are a double," he exclaimed, "you are Nat Brief."

"I'm no double. Single man! Always was, though mighty popular with the gals in my younger years. Had to take to the woods to stay single. No, I'm not double, and I'm Nat Brief. Don't know you from a cedar sprig on a grassy slope."

"Carry your memory back. Remember Turner's River. Remember hunting scenes there, a bear who treed a boy, and a man who shot the bear, only to see the boy going flying from the lightened limb like——"

"Shades of D. Boone! It can't be, it isn't, it surely never will be, because it's impossible, but—you are that boy of a Saywood!" and the man leaped to his feet.

"I'm young Saywood, but not so young now. Shake!"

The Lieutenant was happy. The man before him carried plentiful gray hairs, but he had the physical gifts that defy old age. He was rough as a burr, but as reliable as the north star. They exchanged a grasp that was vise like.

"Don't believe it now!" declared Brief. "Know it's true, but I remain a doubter. Boy, you are as like your father as two hairs from your head, and you're like yourself, too. Why, boy, you have sure growed some since we hunted together and killed that bear."

"What are you doing here, Nat? How did you happen to stray into these hills?"

"No stray about it, boy. Been here a solid year. Get to know my pardner here. He's Mister Metterson, English by birth, adventurer by nature, miner by destiny, as he puts it. Towering the United States. Hired me to take him to where he could dig gold. Brought him here. Been all over these hills; got some gold."

"What about Claggitt and his outlaws?"

"Hey?"

"The hills are the quarters of desperate men, outlaws, pillagers, who hide here and rob and kill outside——"

"Then me and Metterson are them. No other men here. Been here a year, boy. Roved all over the hills, and never a man have we seen here. If there had been much as a baby we would have seen it."

Saywood stared in blank amazement. The statement put local matters on an entirely new footing. When Nat Brief said there were no other men near he knew what he was talking about. Nat's verdict settled it.

Then what about Claggitt and his gang? Saywood's thoughts went swiftly. He remembered that nobody had seen outlaws in the hills. When they were hunted for they could not be found. He recalled, now, that the gang had rested upon theory. Robberies and other evil work had taken place. It was theory that a gang of desperate men hid in the hills. There had been no proof.

The fog faded, as far as their environment was concerned, but it left the matter more obscure, darker, plunged into mystery and greater dread. The lawless persons existed, but they were utterly masked, and, therefore, more to be dreaded. Bad had gone to worse.

"My dear sir," continued Metterson, "if there is anything like what you say, pray admit us to the game. I'm in love with adventure. Is there hope of fighting? Digging gold is a pleasure, but to be where bullets sing and blood flows—hah! I beg the pardon of the lady for suggesting such a thing!" and the speaker again removed his hat.

"Talk!" growled Nat Brief. "Idle talk. Put frivolity aside and let's all eat. Eating is business. Flop down, boy, and help your lady pardner to do the same. Your servant, miss. If I'd met you before my hair got gray I'd likely be a married man now. Like your build. If I may speak right out, you've got some face, and it's a beauty creation. Always did believe in speaking the truth. Hey, Boy Saywood, what's that on your horse? Heard you were a soldier, but reckon it's only a mail-carrier. Got a letter for me?"

"The genuine mail-carrier lies dead a couple of miles back, murdered by the desperadoes of whom I have told you, and as I rescued the mail I still have it. There has been black work, Nat!"

Brief turned, picked up a rifle and began playing with the hammer.

"I'd like to meet that carrier's killer!" he remarked, seriously.

"It may happen at any moment. We have been pursued, hounded, and I reckon the chase is still on."

"You delight me," declared Metterson, his face flushing with zeal. "Why, Nat, you never gave me anything like real fun when we were alone. Now life takes on a rosy tint. A fight would be better than mining."

"You must be wrong on one point," Zyra interrupted. "There surely are outlaws in these hills. There must be!"

"Been over the ground hundreds of times," repeated Brief. "No men, no shacks, no hosses, no tracks. I'll swear to that on a stack of dictionaries."

"But they have been issuing forth from here for years, attacking Government men, and then retreating to their old cover."

"Strikes me," observed Nat, "that I am needed outside this little range. If them things are going on, why, that's a call to me."

Saywood's face flushed, and again he seized the borderman's hand and shook it warmly. There was no other man in the West that would fill the bill as Nat would. Experienced, skilful, cunning in the devious ways of evil men, Nat would be a veritable bloodhound on their trail if he took it up.

Better than all the rest, here was a man whom he could ask to serve him without infringing upon the proprieties at Fort Despair. It did not matter that he was a subordinate at the post, barred from using the troopers to develop his ideas. Nat Brief had no master, and was free to work here, there, or elsewhere. Chance had sent Saywood a helper, and the one most to be desired.

While he talked Nat had been getting more meat into the process of cooking, and he bent assiduously over the fire and broiled. Metterson was at liberty, and he filled the gap that followed.

"Our friend Brief has told you the facts," he said. "I am an Englishman, in this country to taste its wild life. Having a fancy for gold-digging, we have been in this section a year. Nat is a wizard, and has uncovered at least a score of what he terms mines fit to make millionaires, but an ounce of the stuff suits my purpose as well as a ton would. Being a bit restless, we no sooner get one mine located than I say to him, 'Let's try to find another!' He says I am like a boy. Perhaps that describes it, for I really bubble over with enthusiasm when we hit on signs——"

Brief suddenly dropped his broil, caught up his rifle again and ran to the mouth of the valley. The click of his weapon followed.

"Halt, there!" he suddenly shouted. "Stop, or I'll put you like a wild wolf! Halt!"

Saywood and Metterson hastily ran to his side. What they saw beyond was not to be misinterpreted. A dozen rough, evil-looking riders filled the space from wall to wall, and as many rifles were thrust forward. Saywood's pursuers had tracked him down.

CHAPTER X.
ANALYZING THE TRAITOR.

The new-comers had reined in at first sight of Nat Brief, and they now sat in hesitation, a hundred yards away. Nat thrust his elbow into Saywood's ribs suggestively.

"Did they sight you and the gal, previous?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Metterson and me don't look much like you and her, especially me. Let's try the bluffing off game, first. You keep way back and loosen my scheme. Keep the Princess back, too."

The line of riders began to move, as if for action, and Nat slapped his breast dramatically.

"Hallo, there! Visitors not wanted. Private property here. Let us see the shape o' your backs."

"Who the devil are you?" bawled one of the larger party.

"Don't remember what we was christened, but some other things are clearer. Heard you thundering along the canyon, so take this opportunity to repeat that this is private property. No steeplechasers wanted here. Back your teams!"

"Have you and the other man just come here?"

"Just rode over the same ground you are bruising, mister."

"Have you seen nobody alse?"

"Not a soul!" asserted Nat, stoutly.

"They are staggered," Metterson put in. "As my guide says, we don't look like you and the lady. Still, they won't go away without making sure——"

"Don't be so sure of that," said Nat, over his shoulder. "If they are satisfied we're strangers you will see them skip. Men who have robbed the mail ain't anxious to get closer so as to be recognized afterwards."

They had a brief look at me, just now," remided Saywood. "If they didn't recognize me, there is hope."

There had been a lull while the gang consulted, but it was broken.

"Who are you, anyhow?" the spokesman asked.

"Hunters," explained Brief easily. "Big game slayers. I'm guide, but the other six are gentlemen rampagers. We have taken possession o' ten mile square o' game, and nobody is allowed to come in and scare our meat. We won't allow it. Game is game. Understand?"

"What's your name?"

"Cherokee Jim," answered Nat, fluently. "Don't know you. Sure nobody has passed? Haven't seen other riders go by——"

"Bet your life! Nobody goes by here. Trespassin' on our game is forbidden, I tell ye. Understand?"

Another lull followed. At the start several of the men had drawn their hats lower down over their faces, plainly with the desire not to be recognized. That was the motive that ruled the hour. It would have been the easiest of steps for them to insist upon seeing the party of which Nat had spoken, but he had looked far when he analyzed the situation at the start. If they came near they could be identified, later.

The spokesman seemed to dissent from the general opinion, but after further consultation the uncertainty ended. A few additional questions were asked, and then they turned and rode away.

"Worked to a charm!" quoth Brief, chuckling.

Saywood drew a sigh of relief. Safety for Zyra and the United States mail grew more assured.

"Nothing to do now but ride out," added Metterson, cheerfully.

"The deuce!" the Lieutenant exclaimed. "You give me a new fear. Are those men so thoroughly convinced that they will depart, or will they try to waylay us? By hiding they can get a look as we go, and then our artifice will collapse."

"Um, hum!" muttered Nat, and he proceeded to bite off a sustaining supply of tobacco. "Something in that, but we will see. Boy Saywood, you have not yet eat your fill. Go to the fire, join the Princess there—fine-looking gal, she is!—and while you chuck the sinners of life into your carcass I will watch an' think. Somehow we must get you back safe. Killed the mail-carrier, did they? Work for your pardner, which is myself. Eat up, boy!"

Saywood was not disposed to let time go to waste, and as a result of his ideas Metterson walked to the fire to act the host to Zyra, while the Lieutenant planted his back to the rock and clearly but briefly told the borderman all he knew about Fort Despair and its mysteries. Nat listened closely to the end, not once interrupting.

"Let me be sure I understand," he then said. "Before you got to the fort you had a letter of warning tossed into your winder while at the town of Cutlip. Repeat that letter again, boy."

Saywood repeated as near as he could remember.

"Queer!" Nat commented. "Mighty queer. You were warned not to go to Fort Despair, an' told that when you got there you would be surrounded by mysteries you would not understand. What's happened has proved that the letter-writer was correct so fur—eh?"

"Yes."

"That entitles the mysterious letter-writer to our respeck for the other parts o' her proclamation. She said that if you did go to Fort Despair you would be killed?"

"Again, yes."

"And an attempt was made onter your life even while you was at Cutlip. Reckon there is something in it all, and you better look lively that you ain't killed. Now, why should that be done?"

"I don't know. To the best of my knowledge I have no enemy."

"Sartainly not. The letter-woman knew that you was a wide-awake feller, and that others knew it, and that they had planned to put you out o' the way so you wouldn't get onter their guilty secrets."

"That may be it."

"Is the commander at the garrison a stupid man?"

Far from it. Captain Relford has justly earned the reputation of being as alert as he is brave, but he surely has not penetrated the mystery of the marauding men."

"I've seen the Captain, years ago. A brave man, as you say, an' once a notable soldier, but he can't be young any longer. Reckon that's why he has slipped up on catching them scamps. The gang is afeerd you will get them. Mark that down as fact."

"It may be so."

"Now we come to the chief point o' the letter. When you are at the fort those who seem to be your best friends will be your worst enemies. What do you make o' that?"

"Almost from the beginning I have suspected that there was somebody at the garrison who was in league with the so-called Claggitt gang, and my belief has not changed. If something especially valuable leaves there the outlaws are pretty sure to know it is going early enough to intercept and steal it. I should be dull not to suspect that there is a traitor inside of Fort Despair."

"Right, Boy Saywood."

"Where so many men are gathered who can vouch for every hostler, blacksmith, cobbler——"

"Is that the class of folks that the warning letter said would seem to be your best friends?"

"You stagger me, Nat! That's a viewpoint I have never occupied. Still, as to that, should we take the words of the letter as definitely as that? 'Friends' may be anybody believed to be peaceful."

"Judging by what we've seen already, the letter-writer ain't a person to call a horse a saddle. Boy, are you sure of all the officers at the post? Did all of them receive you kindly when you got there?"

"It seems unjust to mention it, but the lieutenant who was next to Relford before my coming—his name is Morcratz—did not so receive me. Being his senior, I displaced him as second in command, though, of course, he retains full rank. To me, I seem merely to have lessened his labor, but he may think otherwise. Morcratz is very stiff with me."

"Look out for Morcratz! The garrison traitor is high up. Just mention some more lieutenants."

"All the others are second lieutenants, and they are, tolerably good specimens.

Bailey and Throop will pass with the crowd, while Payson has been very friendly with me."

"Look out for him!"

"Eh?"

"Those who seem to be your best friends will be your worst enemies," Nat quoted.

"I leave Payson out of consideration—"

"I don't!" said Nat, dryly. "I leave nobody out. Still, see here, Boy Saywood, I'm going to drop in at your old fort, and I'll look around. Maybe I shall hit it straight as to the traitor, though I promise nothing. I ain't no meracle o' wisdom. But I'll look."

"Do so, by all means. To me, Nat, you are one of the wise men of the earth. When I was the boy that you see fit still to consider me, I regarded you as a wonder of knowledge, and I can't wholly drop the impression now. Go on, my friend Solomon, and let me know the result."

"I'll mix it in with my soft and silent hunt for your active robbers. I have proved that no band hides in these hills, thus knocking a crutch o' comfortable belief out from under your feeble limbs"—here the borderman chuckled humorously—"and so I've got to present some other gang to replace them what don't exist. Over that way is the ranching valley, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"The robbers—the Claggitt gang—are there, and them ranchers that you think good, honest men."

Saywood did not reply. He had accepted the verdict of the people long at Fort Despair that a gang was hidden in the hills, never doubting it. Now, with the hills eliminated, what was left? Nothing but the ranchers of Sunset Valley. All there were reputed to be honest, well-meaning men, but the finger of suspicion pointed without a waver.

If the marauders were in the valley they were yet to be uncovered. Where was he to look?

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAIL.

Presently Nat went to the dwindling fire, swallowed several bites of meat without much perceptible attention to the usual formality of chewing, then cast a look at the declining sun and rose.

"Just time for a gallop home," he remarked, composedly.

"Is there not danger," asked Zyra, "that the enemy will try to ambush us?"

"No, Princess, no!" Brief declared. "They may try it, as you suggest, but there is no danger. If we tagged along after them there would be plenty much danger—perfect seethin' oceans on it—but the wild bufferler o' the nibbling lands, which is me, can show them a trick that will hamstring their plots. It's a good thing to know your own dooryard."

"Meaning," suggested Saywood, "that your familiarity with the hills enables you to select a safe way out?"

"Meanin' nothing less, boy. Prepare to mount."

The borderman went to an adjacent valley and returned with horses for himself and Metterson. The Englishman entered into the spirit of the situation with zeal, and packed a few essentials as readily as if he was not a moneyed man. Saywood had read him well, and felt that he was the right sort.

When all were in saddle Nat led the way. At first it was due north, but he soon curved and a wide swing toward home was begun. The hills that had been so difficult to the soldiers were unlocked by acquaintance with them, and Nat always found a friendly, fairly level canyon or ravine that served their purpose well.

The sun was hanging close to the western horizon when, at last, they emerged from the elevated land. Before them was a rolling plain, and the Lieutenant's glass showed the flag of Fort Despair fluttering feebly from its staff. As they continued, Nat contrived to leave Zyra and Metterson a few yards behind, for he wanted additional speech with the officer.

"Now, Boy Saywood," he said, "list to me. Tell nobody hereabouts that you an' I ever saw each other before today. Make it seem we have just met for the first time. Them two back there can be counted on to hold their peace when asked to do it, I'll aver."

"I think so."

"Sure! Metterson is a duck, and as for the Princess—land o' love! what a beauty she is! Then, lookin' back o' the beauty, I kin see brains. They are clean as a well-groomed hoss's sides. She can keep a secret. Hold on! Did I start to talk business or gals?"

"All in time, Nat."

"All in time, boy. Well, I go to the fort, act half-bright and a trifle sleepy, and so look about me my darndest. No guilty man will see much in a grizzled old scout moonin' around innocent—eh? All the while, though, my eyes will be boring for the earmarks o' the mystery. After a time I'll report to you, but don't be surprised if I soon ride away from the garrison, and when I go, let me slip away without form or ceremony."

"You anticipate you will soon go to—"

Nat stretched his arm out toward the invisible meadows of Sunset Valley.

"There!" he replied.

"But you will report your success at the post, first."

"Fully, Boy Saywood, fully. Now, let's each warn his comrade."

Places were exchanged, and each of the leaders opened the subject. Zyra looked at the Lieutenant with a new sparkle in her eyes. Intelligence fairly rushed from that eloquent cover.

"I can guess!" she exclaimed. "Go ahead, Mr. Saywood, and I'll be as mute as a mouse. Tell me how much you will reveal on our return, and no human being shall hear me say more. I'll be mute!"

"Excellent," replied Saywood ,and particularized.

"You intend to do some detective work at Fort Despair," she then said, eagerly. "Oh! if I could help!"

"Would you do it?"

"Gladly!"

"And I gladly accept you for an ally. Wait, watch, report! See all you can. Analyze small things. Study unusual ones—and report. First, may I ask you questions now?"

"Yes, and I think I will answer freely."

"We have spoken of that night when I had a burglar to deal with. Do you really know as little as you led me to believe?"

"I really know no more."

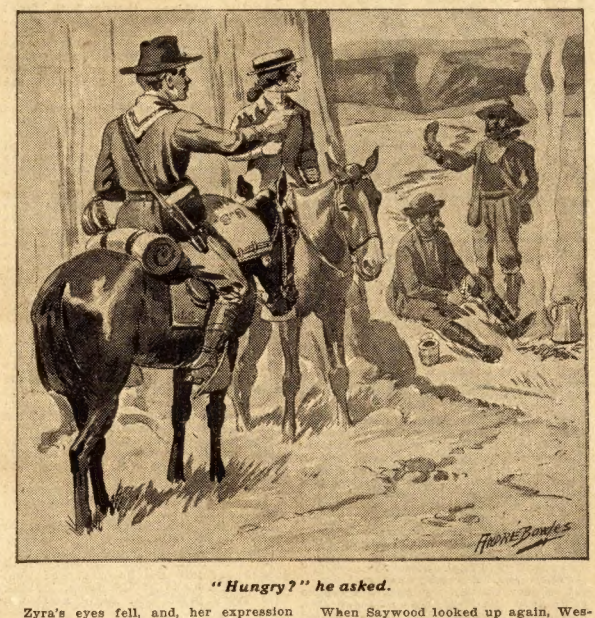
"You did not recognize the man with whom I fought?"

"I did not, for I only saw a shadowy figure as it disappeared."

"Was Miss Estelle Relford fully dressed when she called you?"

"That I don't know. I was not, and I had to wait until I could hurriedly throw on a few things. By that time she was certainly dressed, but she had the same time that I did."

"Bluntly, what do you think of Miss Estelle?"



"Hungry?" he asked.

Zyra's eyes fell, and, her expression grave, she studied the dainty ears of her horse as if they were a fascinating puzzle. Saywood gave her time to tnink, and finally she looked up again suddenly.

"If," she announced, "I did not know that Estelle was the soul of honor I would either refuse point blank to answer that question or violate all principles of truth. Fortunately, I know her noble nature well, for she is noble, thoroughly noble. But, Mr. Saywood, I think she has a painful secret."

"May I ask what it is?"

"I cannot say, for I have not the slightest clew. I don't know. Yet, I feel sure something is troubling her secretly, and whatever it is, Captain Relford seems to know. Often when only the three of us are present, the Commandant gazes at her with sadness pictured on his face. He loves her dearly, and her sorrows grieve him keenly."

"But you don't know——"

"I tell you that I know nothing, suspect nothing. Stay! I will add one item, though I do not know that the two connect. Estelle talks privately with Lieutenant Morcratz, and I have thought he may also be knowing to the secret."

"Is their talk friendly?"

"Oh! yes, for he seems sympathetic, very sympathetic. Now, no more as to that, sir. I fear I will repent having said so much, for, of course, it has nothing to do with this Claggitt outlaw affair. Most surely not. Already I repent having mentioned it at all—yes, I was a silly goose to do it. Goose? Why, I was a base little fool!"

"Of course," replied Saywood, reassuringly, "we have nothing to do with Miss Relford's personal affairs. They shall be respected."

But little more was said, and Saywood was not certain that his companion's enthusiasm for investigation would survive the pressure of sober second thought, but she remained pledged to watch and report to him. If she did not do it the failure was to be found in her loyalty to Estelle.

All this while they had been nearing the garrison, and as the mail-bag rubbed against the Lieutenant's knees he had the consciousness of duty well done, but Fort Despair had taken on darkened attributes. The deepening of the mystery seemed to him to have affected even the buildings there. Ugliness oozed out of the post, making it gloomier than ever.

When they passed the sentry line the garrison limits were as composed as usual, and this was proof that their prolonged absence had awakened no especial alarm. Such absences were common, for without them the inmates of the place would have died of its desolation.

Two figures at once became fixed in Saywood's attention. Near him was Lieutenant Morcratz, and a few paces back was Wesley, the Commandant's servant. The latter gazed with eyes as keen as needles, but Morcratz was like a ramrod gifted with life. He nodded coldly to Saywood, lifted his cap politely to Zyra, and scanned the strangers as indifferently as if they were sticks of wood.

In order to impress Nat with the Lieutenant's identity, Saywood addressed him by name, whereupon Nat had something to say. Saying it, the wily old scout bent low over his horse's neck, holding himself lasily, and his words dripped like thick molasses. Already he had assumed his role of a man none too highly gifted with keenness.

When Saywood looked up again, Wesley had disappeared. It was not the time for dallying, so the Lieutenant hastened toward Captain Relford's quarters, but he was short of that house when the Commandant appeared from the door and advanced with hasty steps. He was agitated and gray of face, and Saywood suspected that Wesley had borne tidings to the official ear. The blood-stained mail-bag was capable of telling much to an observer who had his eyes open.

Relford strode on until he was in their path, and there halted. His hand went out and his finger pointed to the mail.

"In Heaven's name," he cried, feverishly, "what is that?"

"The mail-bag for this post," replied the Lieutenant, directly. "It's usual carrier was murdered in the hills, and I have brought it through."

"Murdered!" exclaimed the Captain sharply. "Did you see it done?"

"No. We found the carrier and his trust together. He had clung to this Government treasure until the last atom of his life had ebbed. He died clasping it."

"Died before you reached him?"

"Yes."

"Have we another masked mystery?" cried Relford, his voice high pitched. "A tragedy, a crime, and no clew?"

"As far as I know no man saw the deed done, and I surely do not know the murderer, but we can infer——"

"Those outlaws of the hills!" snapped the Captain. "The followers of Claggitt, if that's the name of the leader. Has their devilry gone on to this—to this?"

He thrust forward his hand to touch the bag, and then shrank back.

"Blood!" he muttered. "The blood of a Government man!"

The continuation of this remarkable story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 a year, and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

* * *

A Talk About Her.

"Do you like blue eyes, Mr. Hastings?" she asked.

"No; I prefer the big brown kind."

"I have often wished I had beautiful big brown eyes. Mine seem to be such a muddy color."

"But yours are the big brown kind. They are wonderful."

"Oh, Mr. Hastings, why do you say that when you must know that my eyes aren't at all beautiful? I think the girls who have straight noses are so fortunate."

"I think the prettiest noses are those that tilt up just a little, in a tantalizing, saucy way. A straight, strong nose is all right for a man, but a girl with a nose that turns up just the least bit is the one who appeals to me. Girls with such noses always appear to be so much more witty and lively than the others."

"Do you think so? But think of the poor girl with a snub nose like mine."

"Yours isn't a snub nose. It has just the saucy little tilt that I was speaking of."

"Don't you think blondes are just lovely?"

"I never cared much for them. I like deep, rich auburn hair the best."

"Well, I rather like that kind, too. I'm sorry mine is red."

"Red? Why, your hair isn't red."

"What color would you call it, then?"

"It is deep, rich auburn."

"Isn't it funny? I have always supposed I had red hair. Oh, Mr. Hastings, you're just trying to keep from hurting my feelings. But you needn't. I know I'm awfully homely, and I gave up worrying about it long ago. So you needn't feel a bit sorry for me."

"Who ever told you you were homely?"

"Well, nobody every said so, but a girl doesn't have to be told that to know it, does she?"

"Some homely girls wouldn't believe it if they were told, but you certainly know that you are beautiful."

"Why, Mr. Hastings, you mustn't say such things to me. It isn't proper, you know."

"What's improper about it? Is it wrong to tell the truth when it isn't going to harm anybody?"

"But we ought to talk about something else, you know."

"I don't wish to talk about anything else. I want to talk about you."

"Do you, really?"

"Yes."

"Well, if you insist—that is, if you really mean it—do you?"

"Do I really mean what?"

"That you want to—to talk about me?"

"Oh, yes, really."

"Well, I'll see if father will let you talk to him about me. Will nine o'clock tomorrow morning be early enough?"

* * *

Two Dollars to the Good.

An advance agent was ahead of a small one-night stand show. The theater, in an Arkansas town of 4,000, was called The Jones Opera House, but the agent, thinking it had no name, had his "dates" printed "Grand Opera House." The "dates" are the sheets that go on the billboards, and show what night the performance will be given. When the manager of the opera house saw the dates he was provoked.

"You've got to git 'em changed to 'Jones' Opry House,'" he said. "Jones, that's my name; it's named after me."

He insisted, so the agent went to a local newspaper office to see what he could have the dates struck off for. He found it would cost eight dollars. That was too much. He went back and told the opera-house manager. The latter thought it over a while.

"Waal," he finally said, "that is a lot to pay. I'll tell you what to do: You gimme three dollars an' I'll git a painter to change the name of the opery house to the 'Grand.' The painter will do it for a dollar, an' I'll have two dollars for losin' the honor of havin' the house named for me."

The agent handed over the money.

* * *

A Grateful Client.

A story is going the rounds of how one of Suffolk County's lawyers was fooled by a client. A tramp, arraigned for vagrancy, was under suspicion of having taken the watch of an elderly gentleman who was eager to appear against him. The lawyer took pity on the unfortunate pedestrian, and convinced that he was not guilty, took the stand in his behalf and pleaded for him so strongly that the Judge discharged him.

Stepping from the dock the freed man followed the lawyer to the corridor, and in a secluded spot approached him to express his gratitude. He said: "Honored sir, I'm sorry I ain't got no money to give you, but I feel highly grateful and wish to repay you." Fumbling among the the folds of his tattered garments he produced a shiny object, and placing it in the lawyer's hand, said: "Here, take the watch."

A Sweetheart's Secret

Or, THE HOUSE ON THE MARSH

By T. C. HARBAUGH

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CHAPTER XIII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

WHEN I came back to consciousness after the flash in my face in the grove before Jason Sellers' house, I found myself in a semi-darkened, low-ceiled room which was strange to me. I was not at Marshedge, that I well knew, for every chamber of the old place was familiar. I was lying on a low cot with the faint light from one small window falling upon my face.

I rose and went to the casement and looked out upon a landscape over which the first beams of the rising sun were scattering. My head throbbed violently, and putting up my hand, I withdrew it flecked with blood, my own, as I guessed.

Gradually the adventure of the night came back. I remembered the encounter with Jenkins at Marshedge, the trailing of the unknown man to the bridge where he had met Mossy Phipps, my race after him to Jason Sellers' estate, and then—the darkness.

The door of my prison was locked, as I presently discovered, and I saw that I could not hope to escape by the window. There was nothing to do but to wait until the door opened, and, curbing my impatience, I settled back upon the couch and watched the day slip away.

Would they miss me at Marshedge and institute a search? Would Claudia seek to learn why I was absent, and, even if she should, would she suspect that I had fallen into the hands of the country nabob?

No one came to the locked door. I saw the shadows of the afternoon lengthen, and finally the hues of twilight settled over the unfamiliar landscape.

To be shut up where I was was torture. A visit from the man with the white mice was out of the question, for, as the reader knows, I had found his dead body at the foot of the little waterfall. The mystery of his fate, connected with that which surrounded the murder of my uncle, was impenetrable.

At length I heard the sound of footsteps. They came to the door, and I turned to greet whoever might enter the room. A key sounded in the lock with a sharp click, and the portal swung outward. The person who stepped inside closed the door behind him. I stood face to face with Jason Sellers.

This man, whom I hated of all living men, looked at me and took a position in the middle of the floor, folding his arms on his broad chest and permitting a smile to illuminate his sallow face.

"You have changed your residence?" said he.

Rage flashed through me, but I beat it back, for I did not want to incense him and thus lose what I was after, information.

"I am not here of my own will; you know that," I answered, as mildly as I could.

"Possibly not," he returned. "Not content with remaining in my new property, you have taken upon yourself the role of spy."

It was true. I had played spy, but not with the expectation of becoming his prisoner.

"There are circumstances," said I, "when one is justified in 'playing spy,' as you call it. I have no apologies to make."

His face went stern at my words, and for a moment he eyed me like a falcon. Suddenly he leaned forward and made a gesture with his hand.

"Is it true that Miss Grenfell has returned to Marshedge?"

"Claudia is back again."

"I remember. She came when I was last there, but is she going to remain?"

"She came for the purpose of remaining," and I watched the man to note the effect of my answer.

"Mr. Marshall," said Jason Sellers, "I have no desire to hold you captive, even though you were caught spying in my grounds. I bear you no ill will though you have proven stubborn as against my commands. I must have full and immediate possession of Marshedge. It belongs to me."

"But the will——"

"I have told you that the only will which your uncle made was destroyed and by his own hands," he interrupted.

"I shall persist in looking for an undestroyed will."

"Then you doubt my word?"

"I have every reason to doubt it!" I flashed, looking him in the eye.

In another moment the man was at the door and the key clicked in its iron prison.

"You are determined to burn your fingers," he cried, looking back at me. "You will remain in the flame till you are consumed. The secret of your whereabouts is known but to two persons."

"The man whom I trailed and yourself?"

He did not reply. I advanced a step, whereupon he opened the door and placed his body halfway across the threshold.

"You will not quit Marshedge if I release you?" he sent across the little space.

John Groves had returned.

"I will not!"

"Then remain and be crushed!" he exclaimed.

My blood seemed to speed through my veins like streams of electricity. I felt my heart for a moment stand still within me.

"It will take more than your boasted power to crush me!" I threw straight into his teeth. "The man who crushed my uncle shall not crush another of his kin."

He laughed bitterly and with triumph.

"Once more, I offer you liberty, Roland Marshall, on your oath. I will open every door of this house to you if you will go and never again show your face in these parts."

"I spurn your offer. Not until I have unraveled the mystery of Marshedge will I turn my back upon it, and not then if I desire to remain."

"Is that your final answer?"

"There shall never be another."

The door shut in my face, but ere he could turn the key I was at the portal, and flinging wide the entrance I stood once more before Jason Sellers. He backed against the wall with a half-emitted cry. I was upon him with the leap of a lion.

In Jason Sellers I saw more than a mere jailer, I saw in him the cause of Claudia's unhappiness. I saw my uncle's persecutor, though a man of power. My hands were at his throat before he could sound a call for help, and with fiendish malignity I forced them into his flesh and laughed to see his color flee. I could have strangled the wretch then and there. It gave me unbounded pleasure to see his face suddenly darken under my grip. I would have forced him into the solid wall if I could.

All at once I let his body slip to the floor. No one had heard, and help had not flown to the rescue. I looked down at the inanimate thing at my feet and hurried down the stair, which seemed to beckon me to liberty. What if I had killed Jason Sellers? In that wild moment of passion I did not upbraid myself at the thought.

When I reached the foot of the staircase I discovered that I was in the mansion he had erected. My prison, then, had been under his roof. I paused for a moment to collect my thoughts, and then opened a door at my left. Why not look about the house in which I now seemed the only moving thing? There might be hidden secrets which would help to unravel the mystery which overhung Marshedge. To think thus was to act.

I stepped into a large room into which fell the last gleams of day. It was luxuriously furnished, and at one end stood a cabinet which invited me. I was there in a moment. Beyond its door the secret might be reposing, and, not looking for a key, I took my knife from my pocket and attacked it.

The lock snapped with the first effort. I jerked the door open and bent forward. A number of pigeonholes greeted me. My hands leaped from one to another swiftly as an eager eye guided them. It was the lost will I was after, and yet I might have wrongly accused Jason Sellers.

It was from the depths of the last pigeonhole that I drew forth a paper which sent a nameless thrill through my frame. I leaned toward the window with it in my hand and looked at it. It was with difficulty that I suppressed a cry. There it was, staring at me like letters of flame. I held my breath as I read: "The last will and testament of Trajan Marshall."

What should I do? Take it with me? No. If I replaced it, it would not be destroyed, for Jason Sellers would not suspect that I was aware of its existence. Why he had not destroyed it I could not imagine, but there it was, backed in a cramped hand, the missing will of the murdered dead, and I held this haughty man within the hollow of my hand.

I replaced the will and shut the door of the little cabinet. The lock had not been injured. In another moment I was beyond the house. My face was turned toward Marshedge. What would Claudia say?

As I stepped upon the porch the front door opened, and Mossy Phipps stood before me, but she saw me not. The trance once more had full possession of the maid. I stepped aside to let her pass. She went down the steps and trailed off into the grove. Again I was at the sleep-walker's heels.

Totally unconscious of my presence she hurried away, flitting with marvelous precision among the trees. She reached the marsh road and headed toward the hunting lodge. Strange it was that she was leading me toward the spot where I had found the dagger.

All at once she stopped. I saw her start and throw up her hands. The trance had ended abruptly. I was so close to her when she came out of the spell that I could not retreat. She turned, with a startled cry, and saw me. Before I could call her name and bid her remain where she was, she darted past me, and I saw her flying toward the house with the speed of a frightened doe.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GHOSTLY GUIDE.

The very next day I was surprised to find that John Groves had returned. For some reason he had curtailed his visit at Seabeach, and was back in his old quarters to work me trouble, as I saw by his face when we came face to face.

"Roland," said Caludia, as she drew me into the library and turned quickly, "something very strange happened last night."

"It is the strange and mysterious that is always happening here," I answered, with a smile.

"But this event only intensifies the mystery," she returned.

"What is it?"

My love first opened the door which looked out into the hallway, and then made the rounds of the room, looking into every place that might secrete a listener.

"I have found the will!"

I recoiled and gave her a piercing look. Impossible! for had I not seen the will lying in the cabinet in Jason Sellers' house? I had held it in my hands, and yet I knew that Claudia had not been away from Marshedge.

"You look dumfounded, Roland," she went on, breaking in upon by astonishment. "It is a short story. I was awakened from a sound slumber, and instantly became impressed that there were singular doings not far away. I put on a gown and slipped noiselessly downstairs. It was still moonlight, and the shadows that seemed to dance everywhere were grotesque and weird. The house was as still as a tomb, and outside the quiet was equally profound. I am not superstitious, Roland, but some unseen hand seemed to lead me into this chamber. A part of it was flooded by the moonlight, and over yonder, where your uncle was wont to sit at the table, I saw his shape."

She paused and appeared to shiver.

"I tried to shake off the feelings that took possession of me, but the more I tried, the stronger they gripped. I was on the point of fleeing, when the figure rose from the chair and moved over to the cabinet which we have searched a dozen times. I stood like one rooted to the floor with terror. It opened the cabinet and began to look among its contents. By this time I could not have fled if I had exerted myself. The wraith—I can call the apparition by no other name—suddenly turned and came back to the chair. I looked white-faced at it, it slowly faded and disappeared, and I remained where I was, with a cold sweat on my forehead. At last I summoned my courage and went to the cabinet. With trembling hands I opened the door and the first paper I put my hands on was the will."

As she concluded one hand disappeared in her bosom, and the next moment she handed me a folded document which I hesitated to touch.

"Look at it, Roland," she said. "It is here entire, your uncle's will."

I took the paper and leaned toward the window. After a glance I looked into her waiting eyes.

"There are two wills, then," said I.

"Two?"

"Yes. I saw the other in Jason Sellers' house."

Claudia's expression was a study.

"How can there be two wills?" she suddenly exclaimed.

"The future must answer that, dear," said I. "You have read this one?"

"I did not look further than the superscription on the outer fold."

"We will look further now."

She came over to me at the window and put her cheek close to mine.

I opened the paper and ran my eye down the first page.

"It is all yours, Claudia!" I exclaimed. "We are in no danger of being dispossessed by Jason Sellers."

"What?" She clutched my arm. "What is all mine?"

"Marshedge and its belongings."

"Impossible! Your uncle was in a rage when I went away after refusing to become that man's wife."

"Listen to the words of the dead."

Thereupon I read aloud the item which bequeathed to her the whole estate without reservation, and whilst I read I felt her form tremble at my side.

"When is the will dated?" she asked in a whisper.

"July 10th, 188——"

"One year after my flight!" she cried.

"Yes. Trajan Marshall must have forgiven all."

Claudia could not speak.

"If I had but known that——" she cried half a minute later, and then as suddenly checked herself.

"You would have come back, then?"

"I cannot say that I would, Roland. There was Jason Sellers, you know."

"Were you far away?"

"Not far, but——"

"The thought of the man who dominated your benefactor held you aloof? Was not that it?"

"Partly."

"But you did return?"

The next instant I was upbraiding myself for asking the question, for I was getting back to the night of the first mystery when I saw her in the marsh road with the light. She lost color at my query.

"I see," she said. "You are coming back to that night of nights. I have confessed that I was here then. I have heard what Mossy said at the inquest. She saw a woman underneath her window, and she recognized my shawl."

"Yes, Mossy said so."

"They seem not to have pressed her, and she did not tell all she evidently wanted to tell."

We were looking at each other, and another question trembled on my tongue.

"Say on, Roland," she said, with a faint smile.

"I will; I saw you that night, Claudia."

"You?"

"Yes."

"And you haven't told me before."

"I have kept the secret. For love of you I have allowed myself to become fettered to silence."

"And you thought——" She paused and seized my arm. "I have thought ever since I came back that you had a gnawing secret. I could see it at times by your manner. Where did you see me that night?"

"In the marsh road."

"And you knew it was I."

"Yes."

"How far did your knowledge go?"

"It went no further than my observation from my window."

"You did not follow me, then?"

"I did not."

"I thank you, Roland!" she exclaimed, drawing a breath of relief. "I will always thank you."

"You did not remain long at Marshedge that night?"

"Heavens, no!" and again the old shudder swept across her frame. "I wish I had never come back!"

She released my arm and recoiled. I saw her totter to the chair where she leaned back and buried her face in her white hands.

"We are children of fate," came through the tapering fingers. "We are but bubbles on the seas of life." Then she suddenly removed her hands and looked up at me in triumph.

"Now that we have the will the sun may shine once more!" she cried. "We can face Jason Sellers when he comes again. But," she started, "there is the other will. It may be a later one than this. It may prove a sword of Damascus steel in his hands."

She sprang to her feet and stood be

fore me. Never before had she looked so beautiful.

"You have not read the will through," she said, taking the paper from my hands. "I will see what your uncle says."

I watched her intently as her eyes ran down the second page. She flushed and paled alternately. Suddenly the paper fell to the floor and the pallor remained.

"It was a fleeting dream of coming happiness," she exclaimed. "We launched our boat upon a tempestuous sea."

"What is it, Claudia?"

I stooped to pick up the paper, when she suddenly set her foot upon it.

"Don't, Roland!" she exclaimed, in commanding tones.

"Why not, dearest?"

"The will says that I was to have Marshedge, provided I returned within two years. Should I not return within that time, everything was to become the property of Jason Sellers."

I could not believe her words. They had gone through me like a well-shot bolt. Grinding my teeth, I tore the paper from beneath her foot and opened it with a half-ground curse. It was too true. In characters of black and white the will had overthrown all our hopes of happiness at Marshedge. The room seemed to whirl about me. Claudia became as indistinct as a mist.

At that moment a derisive laugh fell upon my inner ear. I turned like one who suddenly hears behind him the deadly hiss of the mountain viper. I needed no hand to guide me to the spot from whence the laugh had come. My gaze went straight to the window which looked into the library from the lawn, and there I saw the withdrawing face of John Groves.

CHAPTER XV.
THE CLEW.

Claudia had not seen the face, and I did not needlessly alarm her. John Groves was more than a secret foe, and I felt that the time was near at hand when I must needs have it out with him. If it were true that Claudia and I had no part in Marshedge, and we had not according to the terms of the will which she had so strangely discovered, we dared not order Groves from the place.

But was it the last will? What was in the document which I had found in Jason Seller's cabinet I did not know, and I now upbraided myself for not looking through it.

The next day I was surprised by a visit from Brutus Bobbs, the officious constable, who came with his face still bandaged. As the fat little man dropped into the library chair he looked up at me with with a quizzical expression.

"You will pardon this visit, Mr. Marshall," he began, crossing his hands in his lap. "If I can be of any assistance to you or to Miss Claudia, you have but to command me."

I started at these words in spite of myself. Something was in the air, and I could not contrive what. This man had pounced upon me and had subjected me to arrest, and I really owed him no thanks, for it was the burglary and not the constable's wishes that had got me out of durance. I looked him over carefully before I replied.

"I cannot say that I need assistance, and as for Miss Grenfell, I am quite sure that she is able to take care of herself."

The very presence of the man irritated me. I knew he had been hand in glove with Jason Sellers, and that the country nabob hated me with all the perversity of human nature. Had Sellers sent him to Marshedge for a purpose?

"I have been ordered to vacate," I said, when I had taken my measurement of him.

"What?" he exclaimed. "You have been ordered to leave Marshedge? I do not understand, Mr. Marshall."

"It belongs to Jason Sellers."

Brutus coughed a little as if to clear his mind.

"I thought there was something in the wind," he said, at length. "I find that I was not mistaken."

"You see I am here yet," I went on. "To tell the truth, I have no idea of leaving just now."

"You are right. I would not go."

I walked over to the table, and, leaning against it, looked down into the pig-gish eyes which were still upturned to mine.

"You are Jason Seller's friend?"

"I was."

"But you are not such now?"

"I am not his friend now," said the constable, with some emphasis. "That man is a scoundrel."

"You have voiced my sentiments, Mr. Bobbs, but I am surprised to hear you declare him such."

"I'll tell you." He uncrossed his legs and threw a rapid glance about the room. "I have discovered who robbed me."

"Ah, you've been on that lay, have you?"

"Yes. Jason Sellers sent that rascal to my house."

I was not prepared for this declaration.

"I have not come here to go into details," he went on. "That man robbed me of the dagger that was found in your room, and also of a certain letter."

"The letter which I wrote to my uncle whilst abroad?"

"That very letter."

"How came that letter in your possession?"

Mr. Bobbs winced at this, but his features did not relax.

"To be plain with you, Mr. Marshall, I carried off that letter myself."

"You're a consummate scoundrel, Mr. Bobbs!"

"Oh," he said, with a grin. "It's not the first time I've had unpleasant terms applied to me. An official, you know, must look for such things."

"In plain words, you stole that letter and purloined the dagger in order to fasten the crime of murder upon me?"

"I had to have evidence of some kind."

"In order to keep up your boasted reputation as a criminal catcher, I suppose?"

"Partly that."

"If you should recover those things, would you again have me arrested?"

"I don't think I should, Mr. Marshall."

"But you haven't changed your mind concerning my guilt or innocence?"

"We'll not discuss that point," he said, with a perceptible squirm. "I'm here on other business."

"Name it." I was anxious to get rid of this reptile.

"It's concerning the second tragedy," he resumed. "I mean the dead man you found at the foot of the waterfall. I've been down there twice."

"Yes."

"I understand that his name was Brawn."

"Theophilus Brawn, self-hypnotizer and the owner of the three white mice."

"The what?" cried Bobbs, with dilated eyes.

"The three white mice."

"I never heard of that. Where are they?"

"Miss Claudia is taking care of them."

"Eh? I would have thought that if they had been carried away it would have been by the person who killed Brawn."

"Who killed the white mice man?"

"I've not gotten that far yet," he smiled. "If I were to make a guess I would say that a woman killed him."

"A woman?"

"If you had examined the ground about the body, which perhaps you did not, Mr. Marshall, you might have seen what I have discovered. Not far from where the form lay were the imprints of a woman's shoe. What number of shoe does Miss Claudia wear?"

I leaned toward the man with a flash of rage which I could not keep back.

"Come, keep cool!" he cried, without changing a hair. "I am just asking for a bit of information."

"I'll call Claudia," said I, moving toward the door.

"I wish you would," said Bobbs.

Three minutes later the door opened, and Claudia entered the library. She cast an inquisitive look at me, but immediately transferred it to the fat man in the chair.

"This is Mr. Bobbs, the constable, dear," said I.

The little man bowed and took a small rule from his pocket.

"You will pardon my inquisitiveness," he said, with a look at Claudia whose face was a study. "Would you let me measure your right shoe?"

A smile flitted over Claudia's face, but the next moment some color left it.

"What means all this?" she exclaimed. "You are impertinent, Mr. Bobbs and——"

"I mean no harm, miss," he interrupted. "If you refuse utterly——"

"I do not refuse," and Claudia placed her foot forward, turning it sole-upward as Brutus Bobbs leaned forward.

"That's all, thank you," said he, when he had made his measurements. "It's funny."

"What is?" said I.

"The measurements of the lady's shoe and those of the track I found where the dead man lay."

A little cry leaped from Claudia's throat.

"It is all mystery to me," she exclaimed, facing the constable. "I must have an explanation. Thus far I have curbed my indignation, but now I give it free rein. What have I done that I must have my shoe measured?"

In reply Brutus Bobbs took a small note book from his pocket and began to turn the soiled leaves. Not once did he look up again till he had reached a certain spot.

"I am quite confident now," said he. "You remember I told you that a woman killed Theophilus Brawn?" He was looking at me.

"You have said that would be your guess."

"Well she did."

"And you are going to find that woman?"

"That's just what I'm going to do." A little laugh rippled over Claudia's lips.

"Maybe you think you've found her already, Mr. Bobbs!" she exclaimed.

"I don't think I have, miss, but your shoe made the print at the foot of the waterfall."

"What's that, reptile?" I cried, bending suddenly toward the little constable as he transferred the rule to his pocket.

"Her shoe made the mark," he replied, with the sang froid of a cool head.

"My shoe, sir?"

"The one I have just measured."

"This is infamous!" cried Claudia, all her blood surging to her temples. "I haven't been to the cataract since my return to Marshedge."

"But your shoe has been there."

"We'll not discuss this matter farther," I put in, my gorge rising until I felt that in a moment I should throw myself upon the impudent intruder.

"And I will not remain to irritate you," suavely answered the little man. "Remember, Mr. Marshall, I am no longer the friend of Jason Sellers. I am the hound dog of Justice. Good morning, both of you!" and the following moment Claudia and I were alone again.

CHAPTER XVI.
THE COLD, WHITE FACE.

"What!" cried Claudia, when the door had closed on the little constable of Addison. "My shoe at the waterfall?" and she looked into my face with but little color left in her own.

"It cannot have been," I answered, reassuringly. "But let us go down and see."

Together we left the house on the marsh and slipped through the resonant woods to the cataract. The morning was one of transcendent beauty. Birds caroled in the trees, and the air was filled with buzzing insects. From beyond the marsh came to our ears the song of the sea of which we could now and then catch glimpses through the grove.

Claudia was strangely silent. Now and then she stole a glance in my direction, but I did not interrupt her meditations. When we came in sight of the waterfall and caught its flashes in the sun, she paused and laid her hand tremblingly on my arm.

"I fear to go on, Roland," she said, in low tones which must have cost her an effort. "What if the imprint of my shoe is really there?"

"Shoes have duplicates, dear," I answered. "The best detectives are often at fault. Why not such a novice as Brutus Bobbs?"

"That is true," and the old flush came back to her cheeks. "We will see this adventure out."

She now hurried on so fast that it was with difficulty I kept pace with her.

"Be careful where you tread," I suddenly admonished. "You might destroy the very evidence we are looking for."

She stopped and then drew back with a half-articulate cry. We reached the soft bank at the bottom of the little cataract and began to look around.

"If Brutus Bobbs really made the discovery he talks about, he may have concealed it," she said with another swift glance at me.

"It is quite likely."

All at once Claudia halted, and looking at her I saw her about to set her right foot carefully in a certain spot. I hurried to her side with a checking word.

"Here it is!" she said, with a forced smile. "Here is a footprint, and perhaps

It was with difficulty I kept pace with her.

the very one the little constable found."

I gazed downward and saw the foot-track. It had remained there ever since the hour of the second tragedy.

"It is not the print of your shoe, dear," said I.

Claudia was on her knees closely examining the impression, and I knelt beside her.

"Roland," she suddenly exclaimed, "that man was right! My shoe made this mark."

"Impossible!"

"Look, Roland." Her tapering finger almost touched the soil. "See! Here is a seam-like trace across the sole. The bottom of my shoe has a welt which would leave this impression. There is no longer a doubt as to what made this impression. My shoe did it."

She was standing erect again, her gaze centered upon me and her face white once more.

"But you were not here before, Claudia?" I cried.

"I have not been here till now since I returned to Marshedge."

She spoke with convincing firmness. I would have believed her even if a wall of evidence to the contrary had confronted me.

"You believe me, Roland?"

"Do you doubt me, sweetheart?"

There was pleading in Claudia's tones. Though I believed that she held the secret of my uncle's tragic death, I could not believe that she had killed the man with the white mice.

"No, I do not doubt," she suddenly ejaculated, "but—oh, Roland! why did we ever meet?"

She leaned against a tree and buried her face in her hands.

"Claudia, Claudia, why this pa on?" I exclaimed. "There is a conspiracy afoot. It is directed against you, but we will crush it. You were not here. I believe you. But the shoe——"

"I say my shoe made that print. Look, Roland," and springing from the tree she set her foot in the impression and looked into my face.

"You see. My foot perfectly fills the impression," cried she. "I wonder who wore my shoe?"

"Had you missed it?"

"Not for a moment," was the quick response. "Of course while I slept I took no note of it."

"You lock your door nights, dear?"

"I never neglect that precaution."

"It is another mystery," I could but say. "It is connected with the first one, which was my uncle's murder, and with the second one as well, for the man with the white mice was killed by the same hand."

I shall never forget the look Claudia gave me at the end of my accusation. It seemed for a moment that she would sink to the ground at my feet, but she summoned all her strength to her rescue and maintained her footing.

"Shall we go back now?" she asked.

"Yes. There is nothing more to see here."

I made a motion as if to obliterate the impression in the soil, but her hand restrained me.

"No, no!" she exclaimed. "Let it remain, Roland. It may assist justice," and I withdrew.

When I had parted with her within the wide hall I went to my room and threw myself into a chair. The sea now roared, but I heeded it not. The rising wind blew the great branches on a near-by tree against my window and threatened to effect forcible entrance. I looked seaward and saw a cloud bank forming above the already crested breakers.

The mystery of the foot-track deepened as I thought of it. If it had been made by Claudia's shoe—and there was now no remaining doubt that it had, though it was gall to me—who had set a foot there? Amid the silence of the little chamber I went back over everything that had happened since my return to Marshedge. There was the murder in the library, the strange revelation of the man with the white mice, and I could not forget that he had declared during his trance that the last cry that fell from my uncle's lips was the name of Claudia. Then came back to me the sight of my love in the marsh road the night of the murder, the sleep-walking of Mossy Phipps, the hiding of the dagger, the taking of it from my room by Brutus Bobbs, its subsequent theft from him by the masked burglar, the meeting of the strange man with Phipps on the bridge, as witnessed by myself and Jenkins, my tracking of this man to Jason Sellers's house, my imprisonment there, the last visit to Marshedge of the constable, the findings of the two wills, the mystery of the shoe. Not a single event was overlooked.

The house on the marsh threatened to become a place of tangled mystery. Not only this, but it promised to blight two lives. If it really belonged to Janson Sellers, not by fair means, as I thought, Claudia and I would ere long be homeless; but the world was wide and at this thought I smiled.

But to quit the place with the mysteries unsolved was far from my thoughts. My uncle seemed to call from the Unknown for vengeance, and I was the last of kin. Then, the dead lips of Theophilus Brawn appeared to whisper at my ear, and I sprang to my feet exclaiming that no human power should drive me hence until the last clew had been discovered and the crime riveted upon the guilty.

I mapped out a plan of future operations as the day drifted away. The storm came and passed with a little rain and a shriek of the wind which died away at sea like the last cry of a drowning man. I stood up and caught the reflection of my face in an old-fashioned mirror which had hung on the wall for years. I drew back from the apparition, for it did not seem my double.

Once more the house on the marsh had grown strangely still. The day had slipped away almost unnoticed. I thought of Claudia, and wondered why I had not been summoned to my meals. Jenkins was very punctual in the way of duty, but I had been forgotten, although hunger had not obsessed me.

In a few minutes I was in the grounds,

(Continued on page thirteen.)

Bud Bilby's Trip

By KING M'CORD

IT LACKED only half an hour of the time scheduled for sailing when Bud Bilby came on board. He carried a hat box and had in tow a most disreputable-looking bulldog decorated with a big spiked collar. The rear was brought up by a negro who staggered under the weight of several suitcases and valises.

"Here you," shouted the genial Mr. Bilby to the first steward he could locate, "find some place to dump my things. All I know is I'm goin' on this Mediterranean drive an' expec' to round up at the Holy Land. Don't be afraid of Bright Eyes," relinquishing the chain attached to the bulldog, "he's so blue-blooded he won't bite onless yuh c'n prove three of yer ancestors came over in the Mayflower. Put 'im in the coal cellar an' ev'ry half-hour giv'im a raw beef sandwich."

The young Mr. Bilby's baggage was whisked away without comment, but when it came to relieving him of his small hat box—that was quite another matter.

"Jes' hold up a minute," he vociferated. "I'm not bettin' which shell the festive little pea is under on this trip." Whereupon he unstrapped the box and out of it took a package about the size of a half-pound can of baking powder. "I want this kept where I c'n put my hand on it any minute I want it, mornin', noon, an' night—an' especially night. Charge me what yuh want, but deliver the goods."

When the steward gave him a receipt for the package, Bilby had one parting word:

"Ef two gents with chiloolоo whiskers an' I'm-goin'-to-conference-hats comes on board an' asks fer Abijah Bilby, yuh jes' giv 'em the tip that I've done bought ev'ry kind o' side-trip ticket the agent had because he wuz a true-blue sport. I ain't ridin' on no cattle pass this trip, an' I'm booked clean through. Tell 'em to take off them linen dusters ef they want to go along with me. With them around, yuh'd think I wux runnin' a Chautauquy or a medicine show.

"Yuh can't miss 'em. One's a dumpy little contrivance with shaft drive, loud exhaust, an' store teeth that don't fit. The other's a rangy six-cylinder critter with a double set o' lamps. Tell 'em I've gone to git a bar-strangled-banner cocktail before losin' sight of me own, me native land."

Such was the vessel's introduction to Mr. Abijah Bilby, known from the Rio Grande to the Platte as "Bud" Bilby.

The last call for visitors to go ashore was driving the belated ones back to the dock, when the two individuals mentioned by Bud put in their breathless appearance, dashing up the gangway with most unclerical haste.

"Is he on board?" was the hysterical query of the Reverend Aminidab Barker, five feet in height and four in girth, throwing down his carpetbag.

"Is this the ship he took?" was the excited question of the Reverend Shadrach Blithers, six feet two in height and two feet six in girth, dropping his shiny satchel.

When told that Bud Bilby was aboard the two ministerial gentlemen drew deep sighs of relief and announced that they also had tickets for the Mediterranean tour. The vessel was well down the bay before Bud ran across them on the upper deck.

"Howdy, gents," was his cordial greeting. He put out his hand with a grin, and they shook it with all the warmth one would exhibit in grasping the flipper of a sea-lion. "Goin' fer?" he asked, gazing meditatively at the receding shore line.

"It all depends," was the discreet reply of the Reverend Barker.

"We haven't mapped out our trip entirely," added the Reverend Blithers.

"Now, I'll tell yuh fellers somethin'," said Bud, shifting his cigar to the other corner of his mouth. "Ef yuh want to know what I'm goin' to do, yuh jes' take the guide book o' this show, start in on the front page an' go through to the back page, an' that's the dope. I'm goin' to see the three rings, the two stages, the concert fer refined ladies an' gents, an' the hull list o' sideshows—snake charmer, dog-faced boy an' all. I'm goin' to see ef it beats a trip up to Kansas City with a load o' cattle. I'm out fer a tony time, an' don't yuh fergit it."

For three days Bud paid tribute to King Neptune. On the first evening he sent for the package he had deposited with the steward, and kept it in his possession until he again appeared on deck. Barker and Blithers were also under the weather, but each evening one or the other managed to creep to Bilby's stateroom and remain closeted with him for a short time.

"I can't make it," Barker was heard to gasp one night.

"You'll have to go," groaned Blithers. "There's more of me to be sick than there is of you. We can't lose a night. He's sick, too, and it might be the one night in his life he'd miss."

"We'll both go," compromised Barker. Whereupon the two limp clergymen made their way to Bilby's stateroom, where they spent a few minutes in the company of the seemingly unregenerate Westerner.

This aroused much curiosity among the passengers. There was no way of accounting for the attraction Bilby had for the two men. The passenger list gave no clew. Abijah Bilby, Rainwater, Texas; Aminidab Barker, Collegeville, Ark., and Shadrach Blithers, Collegeville, Ark., did not convey much information to those who speculated on the relationship. Barker and Blithers were pleasant men to meet, although rather uncouth, but they were never trapped into explaining their interest in Bud. As for Bilby, somehow or other, he baffled inquiry.

At Funchal nearly every one spent the night ashore. Bilby came off about ten o'clock, however, and was met at the head of the ladder by Blithers, who had remained on board. Bud secured his small package from the steward, and

"Yuh fat son of a bowlegged cattle rustler!"

Blithers went with him to his stateroom for a few minutes.

At Cadiz the boat was deserted while the tourists visited that city, Seville, Granada, and Malaga, where the vessel was in waiting. Bilby carried on the trip only one suitcase and his hat box, the latter causing him much concern. Either Blithers or Barker was to be found with him in the evening. Algiers, Genoa, and the towns on the Riviera interested Bilby, but Monte Carlo naturally exerted the greatest charm. During the two days he spent there, roulette was his favorite game. Bud played afternoon and evening, yet no matter how the luck was running he left both nights about ten-thirty. Blithers and Barker sometimes looked on, but one or the other was sure to be about the hotel when Bud returned to accompany him to his room.

The explosion came at Cairo. Bilby had a suite at the Savoy, where Blithers and Barker were also registered. Bud, squired by the lank Blithers, had gone with a party to view the ruins at Memphis, just a day's outing. In the evening, members of the party brought back word that Blithers and Bilby had missed the boat. As the evening advanced, Barker's nervousness and joy seemed to increase. He would grin, snap his shiny teeth, stroke his beard, wipe his brow with his big handkerchief, sit down, look at his watch, get up and walk up and down, and then go through the operation again, each time he looked at his watch having a broader grin.

Nine o'clock. No Bilby. Ten o'clock. No Bilby. Ten-thirty, eleven, eleven-fifteen. The pudgy Barker could not sit still. It was fully twenty minutes past eleven when suddenly bedlam seemed to be coming down the street. Arabs, Turks, and Ethiops gyrated around a common storm center, yelling as if pandemonium had broken loose. Out of this mass, which resolved itself into its component parts in front of the hotel, tumbled Bud Bilby. At sight of him Barker's face turned as white as his collar. He came forward with a sickly grin.

"Why, Mr. Bilby, how glad I——"

"The hell yuh are!" was Bud's one comment as he brushed by the minister. Bilby asked the clerk for his small package, for which he had a receipt, and stood at the counter mopping his brow with a pink silk handkerchief. When Barker joined him, the Westerner proceeded to dress down that individual and his ministerial colleague in language which, although neither chaste nor polite, was descriptive and ornate to a degree. It was then eleven-twenty-five.

"Yuh fat son of a bow-legged, cross-eyed, double-jointed cattle rustler," Bud shouted, when he began to grow tired of his florid style of profanity, at the same time shaking his bundle in the face of the mild-looking little Barker. "Yuh two wuz in cahoots to do me. Look at that clock! See what time it is! Yuh knowed he'd try to ring a cold deck on me. But, by the eternal, I done beat yuh, anyway, yuh and yer long-legged, spindle-shanked, shad-bellied pardner."

All the while little Barker danced around him, begging him to be quiet and doing his best to pacify him. But Bilby would not be appeased.

"Yuh know what he done. Got me out there in the desert an' tried to ditch me. Got me lost in a place called the Tomb o' the Bulls, six miles from the river. But I beat yuh both, yuh sanctimonious sons of Satan. I made that heathen drive his knockkneed jackass all the way to town, an' when he gave out I bought another.' An' I got here. Did yuh ever see a time when Bud Bilby failed to deliver the goods?

"Yuh might jes' as well go back to Arkansaw, yuh dum-blasted, alfalfa-faced galoot. There is so many jes' like yuh back there, yuh won't be noticed. An' take that bean-pole of a blitherin' idjit back with yuh. Ef I lay my hands on him I'm li'ble to break him in two."

With these few choice words Bud Bilby departed for his room, the corpulent little Barker rolling in his wake.

Bilby made the trip up the Nile, as did Barker and Blithers, but relations were strained. Bud had nothing to do with them except at the nightly conferences in his stateroom. The hat box was not part of his baggage on this trip; instead, he had a leather case for field-glasses securely strapped to him. When a member of the party asked for his glasses Bilby confessed that he had none. It was then decided that the package had been transferred to the case. Although curiosity was at fever heat, no one felt equal to asking the relationship existing between Bilby and his faithful followers.

On the second day after the return to Cairo, Bilby appeared without the leather case which had become so familiar, and announced that he was going to Monte Carlo.

"Going to desert us?" was the surprised comment of one of the group to whom Bud made known his intention. "All along you have said that you were going to Palestine with us."

"Not enough excitement in it. Egypt's gimme the creeps. I'll be dead a long while myself, an' I don't want to spend no time now in a land that don't sport an American bar."

"Surely Rev. Mr. Blithers and Rev. Mr. Barker, who seem to have taken such an interest in you," ventured a New York broker, "are going to continue with us."

"Yep, they're goin' with yuh to weep over Adam's grave. I've had enough mopin' over graves even before I got to the Tomb o' the Bull. I reck'n yuh've been consid'able interested in knowin' how those galvanized mummies happened to hook up with me. They've quit on me, so I've staked 'em to the Holy Land. But it's Monte Carlo fer mine, which fer gamblin' has got El Paso skinned forty ways for Sunday. What kep' my han' on the plow so fer, as the Good Book says, wuz the fun I wuz havin' with them two Arkansaw travelers. I've got the game cinched now, an' they know it, so I've done told 'em to be on their way. Seein' as how I'm goin' to quit yuh, I might as well tell yuh the hull story:

"Some folks is blessed with relations, an' some folks considers 'em a evil. In either cat-a-gory yuh could put my Uncle Theophilus Bilby. He wuz my only relative, the which wuz a blessin', an' he wuz always a-sayin' he'd leave his money to the Free Offerin' Brethren, a sec' in which he wuz a leadin' light, the which I regarded as a evil. He sorter helped found the faith, which is flourishin' at Collegeville, Arkansaw, an' he wuz puttin' up the money fer the school they had there; a-buyin' his way into Heaven, I reck'n he thought.

"I knowed he had consid'able money, 'cause he never spent any, but it warn't tell he wuz dead an' buried that I heard

THE WAY OUT

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"From infancy," she says, "I have not been strong. Being ambitious to learn at any cost I finally got to the High School, but soon had to abandon my studies on account of nervous prostration and hysteria.

"My food did not agree with me, I grew thin and despondent. I could not enjoy the simplest social affair for I suffered constantly from nervousness in spite of all sorts of medicines.

"This wretched condition continued until I was twenty-five, when I became interested in the letters of those who had cases like mine and who were getting well by eating Grape-Nuts.

"I had little faith but procured a box and after the first dish I experienced a peculiar satisfied feeling that I had never gained from any ordinary food. I slept and rested better that night and in a few days began to grow stronger.

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"There's a reason." Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

he'd left a million dollars. A lawyer at Collegeville wrote me the sad news that Uncle Theophilus wuz planted under the daisies in that town, an' fer me to hike up there, as there wuz somethin' comin' to me. I thought it wuz a long shot, but I borried a hundred an' fifty dollars from Tub' Kane, who wuz runnin' the Grizzley B'ar saloon, an' one mornin' bright an' early the train stops long enough at Collegeville to let me out on the cinders.

"It sure looked lonesome. I asked the station agent where was the 'bus up to the town, an' he tol' me to quit my kiddin'. Includin' the razor-back hogs an' the students, there must 'a' been five hundred people in Collegeville. An' that wuz the day I met Aminidab Barker and Shadrach Blithers.

"They inquires o' me what I thinks o' Collegeville, an' I bein' a truthful cuss, says I wouldn't live in the town of it wuz nex' door to the Pearly Gates, the which they seemed to think it wuz. At which re-mark they smiled, an' allowed they'd be willin' to compromise.

"'What's the lay-out, gents?' I asks.

"'Nothin' much,' says they, 'only yer uncle has lef' yuh all his money provided yuh live in Collegeville all the time 'thout missin' a day.'

"'The hell he did!' says I, so surprised that I swallers my quid. 'Bout that time I'd a-compromised fer the hundred an' fifty bones I owed Tub' Kane, but I jes' took a fresh chew an' set tight.

"'Ef yuh don't,' they says, 'all yer uncle's money goes to the Free Offerin' Brethren an' its school, fer which we be trustees.'

"'Ef that's yer graft, I'll stay an' invent amusements fer this town beside flirtin' with the travelin' men on Number 6 an' goin' to prayer meetin',' I answers.

"That wuz mighty big talk, but inside I felt mighty bad as I walked 'roun' the square a-kickin' hogs off the sidewalk. I had a look at the will, an' it seemed to be settled, accordin' to the condition, that I wuz senteneed to Collegeville fer the rest o' my natural life, onless I compromised with them church grafters, the which I warn't ready to do. I reck'n they tried to make Uncle Theophilus do too much of the free offerin', so he decided to remember me. I didn't know whether the joke wuz really on the Free Offerin' Brethren or on me.

"Uncle Theophilus' money wuz so beautifully invested that all I had to do wuz to spend the interest. Will any gent tell me how I could spend sixty thousand dollars a year in that village where all the taxable prope'ty—outside o' what Uncle Theophilus had given the Free Offerin' Brethren—warn't worth half of it? I bought a automobile, but the roads wuz no good, an' ev'ry time the blamed thing wouldn't go I had to have a man come clean from Memphis to fix it.

"They wouldn't allow shows in the town hall, so I built me a hall an' had a op'ry troupe over from Little Rock. The church folks wuz scandalized, an' none of 'em went, so that left mostly me an' the razor-backs fer audience. I sure had one swell time. The soubrette an' the leadin' lady wuz a-fightin' as to which I should marry, ontel they heard I couldn't take my wad away from Collegeville, an' then they both backs up. Even them women wouldn't live in that burg fer a million dollars.

"I hires me a circus to play in our town, an' again me an' the razor-backs an' a few moonshiners from the backwoods wuz the audience. Ev'ry now an' then I'd peel off a hundred-dollar bill fer Barker an' Blithers jes' so's they'd speak to me.

"Well, one night I wuz a-layin' awake wonderin' where I could hire a man to give a balloon ascenshun an' paryshoot leap, it wuz jes' about a month afore we sailed on this 'ere trip, when all of a sudden it comes to me that I wuz a ding-gasted idjit from the drop o' the flag. Here I could a-been a-travelin' 'roun' the country all the time, livin' on porterhouse steak an' mushrooms, 'stead of Arkansaw hog an' hominy, an' still lived up to the condition in Uncle Theophilus' will. I couldn't hardly wait fer daylight to read it over. The condition wuz jes' as I thought:

"'All my property I leave to my nephew an' only relative, Abijah Bilby, provided he says a prayer each evenin' before midnight over my remains.'

"'What's to prevent me,' I shouts, 'from takin' Uncle Theophilus with me on my travels? It don't say pray over his grave, but over his remains.'

"I'd been gettin' rhoomatism goin' out to that petrified graveyard ev'ry night fer months an' sayin' a prayer. So I had Uncle Theophilus dug up an' went with him up to St. Louis where he wuz cremy-ated. Now he's my constant companion.

"Barker an' Blithers started to go to law, but it warn't no use. So the Free Offerin' Brethren sent 'em along to see that I lived up to the contract. While the ashes of my Uncle Theophilus wuz in a urn they had some hope, an' they came nigh catchin' me the other day. But now—feel here—feel that money belt under my shirt—I bought it yestiddy—there's Uncle Theophilus in there.

"No matter where I am when night comes, Uncle Theophilus is right nex'. I c'n hol' a prayer-meetin' at dinner or at the card table or any place I dam' please right comf'table."

"But tell us," asked the broker, "what do you say when you pray for your uncle?"

"Well," said Bud with a grin, "it's short an' to the point:

"'May heaven give peace to Theophilus Bilby,
Once his body wuz roastin', an' his soul
it may still be,
A-a-a-a-men.'"

Toodle's Encyclopedia.

Mr. Toodles repaired home to his happy flat in Hyde Park to find Mrs. Toodles frying bacon for dinner over a gas jet in the diningroom.

"They've come," said Mrs. Toodles breathlessly. "The kitchen is crowded full of them."

"How long are they going to stay?" asked Mr. Toodles, trying to be cheerful.

"Why, forever, I hope," said Mrs. Toodles.

"Not if I can help it," said Mr. Toodles grimly. "Did Uncle Jim come, and your brother Bill? If they did I suppose it's all off with that bottle of whisky that I was keeping as a medicine."

"Why, whom are you talking about?" asked Mrs. Toodles in surprise.

"Your relations," said Mr. Toodles.

"But my relations didn't come," said Mrs. Toodless. "It's the encyclopedias."

"O," said Mr. Toodles. "Why didn't you put them in the bookcase?"

"I told you to get the thin paper kind," said Mrs. Toodles with a tear in her eye. "Still they're encyclopedias, even if we did get the thick paper kind. We've got them, anyhow. We've got them; that's the important thing. O' I'm so glad! Just think! We have the gold mine of information and the storehouse of all human knowledge and all that sort of thing, right here in our flat."

"Hurrah!" shouted Mr. Toodles feebly. "Well, I don't see that you have to put any of the wisdom of the ages in the ice box to keep it fresh. What's the matter with moving it to the front room?"

"There's so much of it," said Mrs. Toodles, "I can hardly get into the kitchen. The janitor unpacked the books and piled them on top of the gas range and the ice chest and in the middle of the floor. I can't get out there to cook. The bookcases that I ordered with the encyclopedias are piled up on top of the books. It looks like a fire."

Mr. Toodles looked at the encyclopedias and the bookcases and groaned. Then he walked around the four room flat and figured where the books could go.

"You've got me," said Mr. Toodles. "This is a brick building, you know."

"Why, of course, dear," said Mrs. Toodles. "I know it's brick. As soon as we get the dinner dishes cleared away we can look in volume seven or eight, or whatever it is, 'Bra to Brz,' and find out just what brick is made of and how they put them on the cars and how much they cost and how many kinds there are, and everything."

"Well, I can tell you one thing without looking in volume 'Bra to Brz,'" said Mr. Toodles, "and that is this: Bricks are not constructed of gutta percha and will not stretch."

"O, you've been looking at the encyclopedias down in the office," said Mrs. Toodles. "Won't it be fine when I have a chance to read the encyclopedias, too, and find out about everything?"

"I wish I could get some dynamite and a pickax," said Mr. Toodles. "I would like to dig my way into that kitchen through volume 'Air to Ake,' and volume 'Del to Dem,' and volume 'Jar to Jel,' and find 'Kuz to Fla.'"

"What do you want to find out about?" asked Mrs. Toodles as she cracked two eggs into a pie plate and held them over the gas jet.

"I want to find the word 'flat,'" said Mr. Toodles. "I will skip the part about how flats were invented and who did it. I couldn't hate him any more even if I knew his name. I will jump the page of how they used to put flat owners in jail in the time of Tiglath Pilezer or some old Babylonian gink with a name like that, and I don't give a hip hurrah to know that under Julius Caesar all flats in Rome had to have a south front and all janitors who didn't turn the heat on promptly on the first cold day in the fall was taken out and broken on the wheel. All that won't interest me at all."

"It will me," said Mrs. Toodles. "My, isn't an encyclopedia wonderful!"

"What I want to find out when I hit volume thirty-nine or seventy-nine or one hundred and twenty-three, or whatever it is," said Mr. Toodles, "is the three pages dealing with modern flats. I'll jump the sociology and the archaeology and everything of that kind and read until I find where it tells where you can stow away a set of encyclopedias in a four room flat so that you can get into bed at night without climbing through the bathroom window."

"I'm sure the encyclopedia will tell us, dear," twittered Mrs. Toodles. "I'm so glad you insisted on getting them."

"I insisted on getting them!" exclaimed Mr. Toodles in consternation. "Why, I was dead set against the idea all the time. You were the one who wanted them. You never heard of an encyclopedia until you got stampeded by the advertising that the opportunity of getting them would be gone forever on a certain date. Then you got feverish right away."

"O, well," admitted Mrs. Toodles, "I did say that seeing that our only chance of getting encyclopedias would be gone after a certain date we ought to make up our minds whether we could afford to be without them for the rest of our lives."

"Sure," said Mr. Toodles. "I noticed that the lines in the ads about 'Get a college education for two cents a day,' and 'Join the ranks of the great scholars of the ages' didn't make near the hit with you that the stuff did about all bets being called off at 12 o'clock on a certain date."

"I don't like to miss opportunities," said Mrs. Toodles.

"No," said Mr. Toodles, "and I remember the night you rushed home and signed the coupon in the paper and mailed it in to the encyclopedia gang. You had seen a big sign down the street which read: 'Repent Now, Or Where Will You Spend Eternity?' I told you at the time that that sign was in front of a Salvation Army barracks, but you thought it had something to do with the encyclopedias."

"Anyhow," said Mrs. Toodles gleefully, "we have them, and that's one consolation."

"Well, I won't be consoled," said Mr. Toodles, "until I find volume seventy or two hundred and ninety-eight, which I hope is 'Cer to Cus. I want to dig up a few fancy swear words to use on this memorable occasion."

Not a Cent Less.

Chief Clerk Caldwell of the State Bureau of Inspection was at one time a district claim agent for one of the railroads of the State. He was sent out to inspect a cattle guard where a cow had been killed. The owner said the cow had crossed the guard and was killed on the railroad right of way, while the engineer of the train that killed the animal said the accident had occurred on the highway crossing.

"I took with me from a station nearby a blacksmith and a farmer as witnesses," said Caldwell, "expecting to pay them two dollars each for their time and trouble, the customary price. It took us half an hour to make our inspection, and when we returned to the village I asked the blacksmith what I should pay him.

"'Well,' he said, 'I value my time in my shop at thirty cents an hour, and I have been gone half an hour. You owe me fifteen cents.'

"The farmer looked at the blacksmith in contempt.

"'You ain't goin' to git off with me so easy as that,' he declared. 'Tain't often us farmers git a chance to git even with a railroad, an' they're always browbeatin' us. No, you can't settle with me fer fifteen cents.'

"'Then how much do you want?' I asked, wondering what kind of a Tartar I had caught.

"'Well, you gotta pay me what I want or I don't go to no court.'

"I told him I was perfectly willing to pay his price if it was within reason, and asked him again to name it.

"'By gosh, you owe me a quarter an' I won't take a durn cent less,' was the ultimatum.

"I gave each of them a quarter and figured I had saved the railroad $3.50."

Green-Eyed Monster.

James Henry had not been married very long, but he was of an extremely jealous disposition, and Mrs. James Henry was always in his thoughts.

One day in the city he passed the workshop of a famous clairvoyant and crystal-gazer, and determined to bring the magic art to bear.

Turning back, he entered the salon, and boldly asked the clairvoyant what his—James Henry's—wife was doing.

"She is looking out of the window, evidently expecting some one," said the soothsayer.

"Strange!" muttered James H.

"Some one enters the door, and she caresses him fondly," continued the crystal-gazer.

"It can't be!" cried Jimmy.

"Now, he lays his head on her lap and looks tenderly in her eyes."

"It's false! I'll make you pay for this!" yelled Jim. "It can't be true!"

Things looked pretty black till a smile crossed the clairvoyant's face.

"And now he's wagging his tail!"

Then J. H. collapsed—completely.

Knew the Sign.

George F. Baer, the president of the Reading Railway, was entertaining the Farmers' Club at his superb country place near Reading.

"A good farmer," said Mr. Baer to the millionaire agriculturists assembled round his board, "can forecast the weather by certain minute signs. Thus he resembles little Willie Pitcoe Jr.

"Willie's mother said to him the other morning:

"'Willie, I have a surprise for you.'

"'Huh,' sneered the urchin, 'I know what it is. Pa's back.'

"'Yes,' said Mrs. Pitcoe, 'pa is back from his Western trip. How did you know it, dear?'

"'My bank's lighter,' said little Willie."

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SHE MADE A HIT.

Very Unsatisfactory.

Major Hotstuffe (to dentist)—This set of teeth is not quite satisfactory, Jones.

Dentist—Why, sir?

Major—Well, they seem to retard my flow of language on the links!

Explained.

Mrs. Jones—My dear, dead husband never complained of my cooking.

Mr. Jones (her second venture)—Perhaps that's why he's your dear, dead husband.

Things Unprintable.

Willie—Mother always carves when we have company to dinner.

Bobby—Isn't your father able to?

Willie—Guess he ain't able to without sayin' things.

H's Luck.

"The birthstone is supposed to control our destinies. Now, what is your birthstone?"

"Judging from my life experience I am inclined to believe it is a brickbat."

Miss Giraffe—"That's a funny looking dress skirt."

"I'll just slip it on."

"And take a walk."

"I'm certainly making a hit!"

A Feminine Talker.

Small Boy—Mom wants a loaf of stale bread ter make stuffin' with for our turkey.

Baker—We have no stale bread left.

"No bread?"

"Nothing but fresh bread."

"Gimme a loaf."

"But you said your mother desired stale bread."

"Yep."

"This isn't stale."

"Mom's run across th' street to talk with th' neighbors 'bout th' goings on at Mrs. Blinker's last night, and it'll be stale by the time she gits back."

Tried to Please Her.

Mistress—I'd just like to know what was the meaning of all that loud and angry talking downstairs last night, Domestic—That was just me and me husband, mum.

"Your husband? You told me when you came that you were not married."

"I wasn't then, mum; but you complained about havin' so much lovemakin' in th' kitchen, so I married one of 'em."

Only One Drawback.

Caller—And so you have a good girl at last?

Suburban Hostess—Yes, a perfect jewel. But there is one drawback.

"What is that?"

"She has two children, and my husband and I have to take care of them while she gets the meals."

Domestic Economy.

Mrs. Binks—How will we manage to keep warm, with coal so high?

Mr. Binks—You think of the fact that I can't get you a new bonnet, and I'll think of the outrageous price of coal, and then we'll both boil.

Only a Liar.

"Is there anything ultra-mendacious about that man?"

"Nothin' so bad as all that, but he's a big liar."

Mother—Have you been a good boy at school today, Clarence?

Son—Yes, mother; I didn't get caught once.

Why?

Kind Lady—You look tired.

Railroad Conductor—Yes, madam. I'm troubled with insomnia.

Kind Lady—Poor fellow. Why don't they put you on a sleeping car?

Fatuous Felix—Yes, lady, it was awful! Tanks fer de pie. You see 'twas dis way. I heard de chug chug a-comin' an' smelt de gasoline an' made a spring, but I wasn't quick enough an' de roarin' machine passed directly over me prostrate form.

Kind Soul—And you live to tell the tale!

Fatuous Felix (shuffling away)—Sure, lady; it was an aeroplane.

Money Tight.

Drug Clerk—I've been docked a week's salary for making a mistake and killing a man. Lend me five dollars, won't you?

Friendly Policeman—Couldn't possibly. I've just been suspended a week for killing another one.

Not Dangerous By Itself.

Agent—Mr. Sawem wants his kindling-wood stock insured. Isn't that an extra risk?

Superintendent—Not unless it's alongside of a kerosene factory.

Some Natural.

Mrs. Brush—Did you see my husband's painting, "The Country Road," at the exhibition?

Mrs. Painter—No; I did not. Was it good?

"Why, it was so natural they had to oil the road every day to keep the dust from getting on everything."

A Slur.

"See, I am familiar with your music," remarked the amateur at the musical the other evening.

"It seems so," replied the popular composer. "You are taking liberties with it."—Judge.

That's Why.

Patience—He promised to take me out for an automobile ride and he came around today to say that he could not.

Patrice—Did he seem embarrassed?

"Yes; I guess that was the trouble. He seemed financially embarrassed."

Never at Home.

"It's awfully hard to be married to a traveling man," sighed one of the neighbors, "and have your husband away nearly all the time."

"It might be worse," sighed the other woman. "You might be married to a clever after-dinner speaker."

The Discovery.

Snobby—Aw, what did you find out regarding—a w—my family tree?

Genealogist—That the crop was a failure.

She Was Ready for Him.

Tramp—You know the sayin', mum, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

Mrs. Subbubs—Very true. And since you speak in proverbs, I'll refer you to another old saw.

Tramp—Which one is dat, mum?

Mrs. S.—The one back in the woodshed.

Just Two Orders.

Blink (the wholesaler)—Well, how many orders did you get yesterday?

Gink (the salesman)—I got two orders in one store.

Blink—What were they?

Gink—One was to get out, and the other was to stay out.

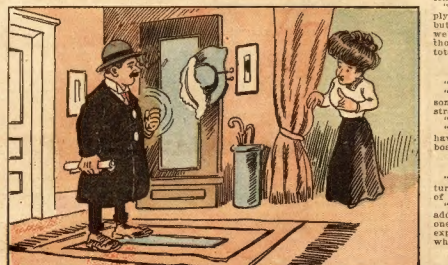
The Baby Stars.

Those baby stars must grow quite fat
That eat their curds and whey,
And have their high chairs all drawn up
Along the milky way.

The Ugly Brute.

"See that measuring worm crawling up my skirt," cried Mrs. Bjenks. "That's a sign I'm going to have a new dress."

"Well, let him make it for you," growled Mr. Bjenks. "And while he's about it, have him send a hookworm to do you up the back. I'm tired of the job."



Waiting for the Solution.

"Some of the problems of human existence are becoming more and more complex."

"Yes," replied the admiring parent. "I can hardly wait for my daughter's graduation essay to let us know what to do about them."

Total Abstinence.

It was on a street car that a passenger, whose general getup suggested a clerical calling, was overheard saying to a companion: "I realize that women are by nature and instinct bound to go in for adornment in the matter of dress, but they are getting more and more recklessly extravagant. I believe in temperance in dress."

"Temperance is all right," was the reply. "I believe in temperance myself, but what with the bobble skirts and cobweb stockings it looks more to me as though the women were going in for total abstinence."

Halfway Over.

"Isn't the ocean grand and majestic?"

"Yes; and there is an indefinable something about it that impresses me strangely."

"What is it?"

"I was just trying to determine... I have it. It's the utter absence of billboards."

Her Admission.

"Say, Mayme, did you ever have any turtle soup?" asked a rawboned youth of the girl beside him.

"No," admitted the maiden; "but," added she, with the conscious dignity of one who has not been lacking in social experience and opportunities, "I've been where it was."

An Illustration.

"For gracious sake! Listen to that child yelling! What on earth is the matter?"

"That's Mrs. Scribble's boy. She's always whipping him because he interrupts her in the pieces she's writing for the papers about how to make home happy for the dear little ones."

Just Dying to Do It.

Servant—No, the vicar is not in just now. Is there any message?

Old Woman (cheerfully)—Well, tell him that Martha Higgins would like to be buried at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon!

Jack's Bite.

Jack and Bob were out for a day's fishing last summer. They had been sitting very patiently by the side of the river for nearly four hours without making a capture, when suddenly Jack cried out:

"Bob, I've got a bite."

"What is it?" cried Bob, in excitement.

"A trout?"

"No," replied Jack. "It's a wasp."

A Start in Life.

Medical Student—People don't want young doctors. How on earth do they get started?

Professor—It's simple enough. They just sit in their office and fret and worry over the rent until their hair turns gray, and then the patients come with a rush.

Ups and Downs.

Union Avenue Whist Hostess to Guest Who Was Playing in Hard Luck—Well, well, Mrs. Winawhile, I believe you are about to lose your prowess.

Mrs. Winawhile (looking suddenly horrified)—Heavens, Mrs. Tinfavor; not so loud; give me a pin!

Better Way.

"I believe I'll give that poor stray cat a piece of meat."

"What, and pauperize the cat! Always help the poor to help themselves. Scatter some crumbs on the sidewalk. They may attract a bird for the cat to grab."

A Frequent Occurrence.

"I say, Captain Bragg, has it ever happened to you to have your leg bitten off by a shark?"

"Has it ever happened to me? Why, dozens of times!"

ON THE SHORE.

He—Do you think your pa would object to me for a son-in-law?

She—He always says he don't care what becomes of me.

Its Only Purpose.

"Oh, Willie, Willie," cried a teacher to a hopelessly dull pupil, "whatever do you think your head is for?"

Willie, who evidently thought this another of the troublesome questions that teachers were always asking, pondered deeply. "Please, miss," he replied at length, "to keep my collar on!"

Dennis Took a Tumble.

Mrs. Murphy—So your son Dennis fell from his airyoplane? Sure, OI thought he was learnin' to fly in a corrispondence school.

Mrs. Casey—He was, but he sthopped short in the middle of a lesson.

The Exception.

Some one or other once said: "It's a poor rule that won't work both ways."

"Well, try telling mother that she looks so like her daughter that you cannot tell them apart. And then try it on the daughter."

Not His Way.

"Don't you think, Mr. Jobbly, that it is generally safe in making a judgment to go by the consensus of opinion?"

"No, I don't believe in none o' them fool ways. I b'lieve in goin' by what the most of other folks think."

No Turpitude Involved.

"Judge, I ain't no vagrant. I'm in hard luck now, but I've seen better days."

"But this officer says you have been arrested repeatedly."

"He must be alludin' to the times when I owned me own automobeel."

Adam's Little Joke.

"Eavesdropping!" exclaimed Adam, as his wife tumbled out of the fig tree.

Hitching Prohibited.

A clergyman in a small town was deploring the fact that none of the couples that came in from the country to be married stopped at his place for the purpose.

"Well, brother," said the man addressed, "what can you expect, with that big sign on the tree there: 'Five Dollars Fine for Hitching Here'?"

Farmer—What, going to quit? Waal, I s'pose ye want a recommend, do ye?

Farm Hand—Waal, yes; but if it's all th' same, I wish ye'd sign a fictious name to it. I'd hate t' have people think I'd work for sech a feller as you.

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THEY HAD A SHOCK.

"You know," reminded the bride, "we've got to tell father."

"Yes, I know," admitted the bridegroom gloomily. Then they looked at each other silently and realized for the first time that life has its hard spots.

Not that they had not been well aware before that they must tell father. That was the main reason they had eloped.

The wise person when he had anything to tell Con Bedford always chose something pleasant, because even so it was apt to be a difficult task. Con Bedford had beetling brows and a disposition to match and his method of conversation all attack was a similar to a wild animal's leap from the jungle. Ordinarily brave persons telephoned when in doubt as to the reception of their remarks and the timorous telegraphed him from some remote point. It is on record that Con's partner went to Europe and cabled from there when he had to break the news to Con that their cashier had absconded with $50,000.

So it is readily seen how a young man of becoming modesty might hesitate to go to Con Bedford and offer himself as a 'son-in-law.' Bedford disliked the idea of a son-in-law on general principles and his daughter declared that the only way to compel him to take one was to rope and throw him and then thrust the unwelcome gift upon him.

There had been times when Elmer Slatte had nearly had the courage to brace up to Con and ask his permission to marry Maud, but when he was thus at the apex of his daring Maud would have attacks of terrors.

"You don't know father!" she would protest, wildly. "Please don't think of it, Elmer!"

Then when Maud in reckless humor would advise breaking the news Elmer would be feeling cautious. He reminded Maud that her father's office was at the top of a particularly steep flight of stairs.

Then in utter despair they went away one day and were married. Now Maud and her new husband agreed that the news must be broken to Maud's father.

"There's no telling," Maud would say after each discussion, "what he will do to you. He may do something awful. He loses control of his temper so easily."

"Well," Elmer bristled, "when you come right down to it, there is nothing about me that is calculated to make a man of ordinary common sense have a fit!"

"But, darling," Maud pointed out, "father hasn't ordinary common sense at all—it's quite extraordinary—everybody says so!"

Realizing their peril.

"I might phone," Elmer offered.

"But we've got to face him some time," Maud objected.

"I'll stand back of the office door from the outside so he couldn't get out and then punch a hole in the glass and talk through that!"

"You are ridiculous," pronounced Maud, distractedly. "Can't you think of something?"

"No," Elmer said finally, "I can't think of a thing to do except to go to him and just tell him. My life is insured."

"All right," Maud said. "I'll go with you—yes, I will! Didn't I just promise to stand by you in trouble and sickness as well as health? And I fear, dearest, you have a hard sick spell coming on!"

Hastily, before their courage should evaporate, they headed for Con Bedford's office. It was just about closing time, when he was likely to be tired and particularly cross. They ascended the elevator in a semiparalyzed state and walked across the main office as though their feet were frozen. Before the closed door to Con's private room Elmer and Maud instinctively kissed each other, realizing their imminent peril. Then they fumblingly opened the door.

"How do, Mr. Bedford? We're just married and want your blessing!" Elmer threw at his formidable father-in-law in one gulp. Maud closed her eyes. There was an awful silence.

"That so?" inquired Con in an almost pleased tone of voice. "Well, I never expected to be lucky enough to get a son-in-law who had sense enough to duck all the fuss and feathers of a fashionable church wedding! It shows that you're the right stuff! I'd like to shake hands with you! What's the matter with Maud?"

"I think," said Elmer, "that she's fainted. Er—you see, she couldn't stand the shock you've given her!"

Not His Troubles.

"Well," remarked a distinguished Southern Senator, recently, "there's enough doing in Washington just now to satisfy even the most rabid radical. But despite the deluge of allegations, investigations, recriminations and political clap-trap, the old capital moves on imperturbably. Reminds me, in fact, of an old negro I knew once.

"This old fellow, according to report, was suffering more than his share of trouble; and, meeting him one day, I said: 'I'm sorry to hear of your distress, Uncle. If I can help you, you have only to tell me how.'

"'Wall, sah,' said the darky, after a moment's reflection, 'yo'-all mought give de ole man a lettle 'baccy; but about dis yere distress—Ah dean' 'sactly on'stan' yo', sah.'

"'Why,' I explained, handing him a cigar; 'distress means trouble. I want to help you.'

"'Trouble?' he repeated. 'Ah ain't got no trouble, sah, 'ceptin' a lettle rheumatiz.'

"'But isn't your wife dead?'

"'Yas, sah; ole Jane, she done pass erway.'

"'Wasn't your brother's barn burned?'

"'Yas, sah; Jake's bahn done get burnded down ter de groun'.'

"'Isn't your son in jail for stealing chickens?'

"'Yas, sah; Zeke done got cotched by de law, sah, at de same time ma sister Lizzie's chile done die ob de measles.'

"'Well!' I gasped. 'Isn't that trouble enough?'

"'Yas, sah; Ah spects it am; but dat's dey's trouble. All de trouble Ah got am a lettle rheumatiz.'"

A Vermonter's Failure.

"The inefficient are necessarily the disobliging," said Frank A. Munsey, apropos of a political leader who had failed.

"A middle-aged failure got a summer job in a Vermont general store last month. A boy came in one morning and asked him for half pound of melted maple sugar, the famous Vermont dainty, at the same time laying a pot on the counter.

"The inefficient failure, without weighing the pot first, ladled a lot of the sticky syrup into it, then, of course, when he set the pot on the scales, it went down with a bang. Finally he ladled out all he could—but again, bang went the scales.

"Then the man returned the boy his pot and said:

"'Go back home and tell your ma, sonny, we can't make a half-pound of melted maple sugar.'"

Wide Acquaintance.

A nouvelle-riche dowager, only recently removed from the environs of a Western packing house, has afforded much amusement while clambering up the slippery rounds of Washington's social ladder. One day, after she had returned from cricumnavigating the globe, she essayed to entertain a drawingroom with a boastful account of her travels. She had been everywhere, and her flow of slaughter-house English was augmented by frequent wavings of her bediamonded hands, and forceful noddings of her tiaraed head.

"Did you see the Dardanelles?" asked a sprightly debutante.

"And the Himalayas?" inquired another fair young bud.

"I dined with them in Paris," replied the dowager, triumphantly.

And she wondered why everybody smiled.

Conservative Financier.

Moses Heck of Baltimore, Md., takes no stock in frenzied finance, neither does he believe in running unnecessary risks. He is rich, prudent, and wise. He was sitting in his office one day when a young man, full of optimism and ideas, rushed in with this proposition:

"Mr. Heck, if you will lend me $1,000, I know how we can make a lot of money. The thing is a cinch, and we can't lose. It's like taking money from a child."

Mr. Heck refused to be carried away by enthusiasm.

"How much money do we need to put this deal over?" he asked, in a calm, judicial tone.

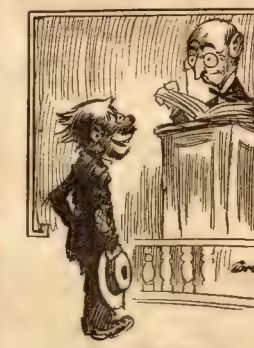
"I tell you," said the young man, "we must have $1,000."

"How much will we make?" pursued Heck, still cautious.

"Two hundred dollars, $100 for you, and $100 for me."

"Wait a minute," concluded the older man, and went back to his safe, from which he took a roll of money that looked big enough to cut a dash in Wall Street.

"Here, my son," he said kindly, "is $100. We will consider that we have made this deal and it has been a glittering success. You make your $100 and I save $900."



"I am going to send you up——"

"Well, you can't keep a good man down, Judge."

Mother's Diagnosis.

Speaking of mothers, a Squirrel Hill matron is an object of considerable solicitude just now on the part of a couple of young Pittsburghers, although she doesn't know it. The young man called last night, and this was the first question he asked:

"Have you spoken of our love to your mother as yet?"

The girl shook her head.

"Not as yet," she whispered.

"Has she noticed nothing?"

"She has noticed that I've been acting queerly of late, but she thinks it's just biliousness."

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A Sweetheart's Secret.

(Continued from page seven.)

which included the marsh road where I had seen Claudia with the light. The deeper twilight had come, but enough brightness remained to show me my surroundings. I started down the road, with one cheek toward the marsh, hardly knowing why I had impelled myself forward.

At a bend in the way I suddenly paused and looked back. Through the trees I could make out the outlines of the old house, but not a light was to be seen. All at once, however, I caught sight of a little flash which died away as quickly as seen. Some one came down the road. I drew back and watched, all my nerves at full tension. The footfalls sounded plainly on the graveled way.

Almost suddenly a figure hove in sight, and I saw John Groves leading Bardolph, the watch-hound. The big dog had his nozzle near the ground, and I wondered if he were trailing me. The twain passed my place of concealment in the bushes, and vanished toward the hunting lodge. In less than ten minutes they came back, Groves still leading the dog.

The couple had scarcely passed ere I sprang out and bounded toward the lodge. Something told me that I was wanted in that direction. I lost no time. If Groves was up to mischief, I would know it and have it out with the scoundrel.

The lodge came suddenly into view. I sprang across the little lawn in front of it, and then reeled backward with a cry which stilled the chatter of the last birds of twilight in the trees. Something lay at my feet, something so terribly human that I felt my heart pause in its cage. I stooped with a gasping cry, and when I rose I was holding Claudia in my arms, and my lips were wailing, "Dead! dead!" as I looked into the cold white face.

This extremely interesting story will be concluded in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once.

* * *

FAIRY EYE-GLASSES.

When Alma Hunt awoke on her seventh birthday the first thing she saw was seven little candles placed on the foot of her bed. They were burning cheerily and helped her to get up earlier than was her custom in cold weather, and she surprised her parents by being the first one down to breakfast.

After breakfast Alma's mamma gave her a tiny box, and hastily opening it she found a beautiful gold thimble. Most little girls would have been delighted with such a present, but, as Alma expressed it, she "hated" sewing and now she knew that mamma intended to give her more lessons soon.

With a scowl of discontent on her face, Alma left the house and went for a walk in a clump of woods near by. This grove was a favorite haunt of the little girl, and she always went there when she was "out of sorts," as she said.

Alma had just seated herself comfortably on a fallen log and was beginning to wonder when mamma would give her the first sewing lesson when she beheld an object before her that so surprised her she came near falling from her seat.

There stood a little man no taller than her thumb. He was gorgeously dressed. His tiny trousers were of soft green moss, his cloak was made of cloth that the silk worms had woven and his cap was fashioned from a buttercup petal.

What surprised the little girl most was the gloomy expression on the small face and almost before she knew it Alma exclaimed, "Why, what is the matter? Can I help you in any way?"

The little man seemed much astonished at being addressed, as evidently he had not noticed the little girl before, but after surveying her a few minutes he said, "Well, I do wish I could get some one to help me. You see, I am the king of fairies, and we have planned a fine ball for to-night, but the court ladies can't find any one to make their dresses and they declared they won't attend the ball. I assure you, we gentlemen are in despair. Can you sew, and do you think you can make the fairies' dresses? he asked eagerly.

The question almost took Alma's breath away, but she decided to try anyway, as she was sorry for the little king.

"Where will I get material to make them of?" she said, doubtfully.

"Oh, I'll manage that," responded the little man, and he disappeared in the forest before Alma could say another word. He soon returned, however, with his arms full of beautiful fabrics for making fairies' clothes. There were rose petals of all colors, butterfly wings, cobweb lace, dewdrops and ever so many more pretty things.

Alma began to think it would be great fun, after all, even if she did dislike to sew. "But what am I to sew with?" she asked.

Again the king went into the forest and came back with all the implements for sewing. The thimble was exactly like the one her mamma had given her that morning, and Alma flushed guiltily as she took it.

The scissors were made of tiny grass blades, the needle of a sharp seed, and the thread was silk from a spider's web.

"Now," said the little fellow, "I guess we had better make the queen's dress first. It shall be of purple pansy petals, and be trimmed with cobweb lace and dewdrops."

"Oh, how lovely it will be!" exclaimed Alma, and she began to unwind some silk to thread her needle. It took some time to do this, as the needle was very fine, but at last she succeeded and began to sew, talking all the while to the fairy. Suddenly, looking down at the work, the little man exclaimed: "Oh, what long stitches you are taking!"

Alma blushed to the roots of her hair. She had always been in such a hurry to get through her sewing that she had not learned to take short stitches, and to be reproved by such a tiny person was humiliating.

"Oh, I forgot the stitches were for fairies," she stammered.

"That's all right," interrupted the king. "I'll get you some fairy glasses; I think they will help."

"Indeed they do," said Alma, when they were firmly fastened on her nose; and now the work progressed nicely.

When the dresses were finished the fairy plucked a large leaf, laid the dainty garments on it and pinned the covering together with a thorn. After he had done this he turned to Alma with a sober face. "I'm sure all the fairies would like to have you attend the ball, but I'm afraid you are too large," he said, regretfully. "We will repay you some day, however," he continued; then turning toward the forest he uttered a low call. Immediately four beautiful butterflies fluttered down. Taking some silk from a spider's web near by the fairy king soon had his team harnessed to the load of dainty dresses. He bade Alma goodby and climbing on his load was borne swiftly away.

Alma watched until he was out of sight and then she started up and rubbed her eyes. As her hands fell in her lap she felt something hard, and putting her hand in her pocket drew out the gold thimble that mamma had given her that morning.

"It's just like the fairy king's," she mused; "I wonder if I really saw him or I dreamed it all," and then Alma started for home.

When she reached the house she told her mother about her strange experience. "Mamma," she said, "I'm going to learn to sew nicely and whenever I work I will pretend I have on those fairy glasses so I will make short stitches; but I'm glad I don't have to make my stitches quite so short as when I was making the fairies' dresses."

* * *

As a rule when a man tells his wife that he is sorry about anything he means that he is sorry she got next.

Rough on the Major.

Captain Jinks was giving a party, and had arranged a nice little toast list in deference to the presence of Major Claequer, an able after-dinner speaker. The latter was attended by his wife, a very deaf old lady, who was much attached to him. As the gallant officer was to reply to the toast of "The Babies," his wife, knowing his fondness for children, judged that it would suit him admirably. At the last moment, however, the major's subject, unknown to Mrs. Claequer, was changed to "The Ladies." But it made no difference to the officer, and his sparkling speech delighted the company.

A lady congratulated the Major's wife upon her husband's brilliant effort.

"Oh, Mrs. H—," she replied, "you don't know how fond the Major is of them. I've seen him with two or three of them on his lap at once——"

"Oh, Caroline," gasped the Major, who had overheard the conversation.

"Just teasing the life out of the poor things," went on his wife, wholly oblivious to the shouts of laugher.

* * *

A Vacuum.

Chairman (addressing a meeting)—I am sure we will all be very sorry our secretary is not here tonight. I cannot say we miss 'is vacant chair, but I do say, we miss 'is vacant face.

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It's better to be level-headed than flat-footed.

Make it easier for your fat friends by calling them portly.

Many a tailor's goose lays golden eggs for its owner.

When some people air their knowledge they hot air it.

The man who hesitates may win by watching others lose.

The better the doctor the less he has to say of his ability.

There's room at the top because somebody is always coming down.

The advice that your friends hand you seldom leads to their pockets

Most men like to hear themselves talk better than other people do.

A man may not be able to do his own cooking, but he can roast the cook.

The woman of the hour is the one who says she'll be ready in a minute.

One way of making an enemy of a man is refusing to laugh at his old jokes.

Some writers have a wealth of thought, and they all have a thought of wealth.

Women lose their maiden names when they marry—and most men lose their identity.

How it must jolt the wife of a blockhead when she is celebrating her wooden wedding!

It's easier to induce some men to run for office than to walk a block to secure a job of work.

It's all right for a man to be cool in the hour of danger—if the coolness isn't all in his feet.

Just about the time a man begins to think he is acquainted with his wife she begins to act strangely.

The peacemaker may be all right, but he is never appreciated by the man who is getting the best of it.

Many a man remains in the bachelor class because he is skeptical as to the ability of a woman to support him.

If you are looking for an honest man, all you need do is tackle the first man you meet and he'll admit that he is the party you are looking for.

It sometimes happens t at a woman is almost as sorry she married a certain man as she is glad that she kept some other woman from getting him.

A GUST OF WIND.

"Look, Margaret!" said the girl in the toque, sitting up suddenly and staring intently across the crowded waiting room. "Look at that man—the one just getting into the elevator! It's too late. He's gone."

She sank back into her seat. "If he hadn't got away so quickly I should have rushed up to him and asked him to please pull my hair," she remarked pensively.

Her companion looked exasperated. "Helen, you do say the most ridiculous things! Will you kindly tell me why you should want to rush up to any man and ask him to pull your hair?"

The girl in the toque giggled.

"Why, yes, I was just going to tell you," she replied.

"You know two years ago last summer, after I had typhoid and had to have my hair cut off. I went up to a farm in Wisconsin to stay a month."

"I knew you stayed only a week."

"That's part of my story. One day when I had been up there nearly a week I started out for a long walk in the woods. In the course of my wanderings I came to a lovely little lake with the most beautiful pond lilies floating on it. There was a canoe drawn up on the beach at one end and a little boathouse among the trees——"

"When does the man come in?"

"All in good time, my dear. I'm leading up to him. I looked all around for somebody the canoe might belong to, and then I decided to borrow it for a few minutes and paddle over and get some lilies, trusting to luck that the owner would stay away until I got back."

"Nice, high-principled thing to do."

"I paddled over to the lilies and was having a beautiful time gathering a great bunch of them, when I discovered that the paddle was floating around in the water just out of reach. I leaned over as far as I dared, and was clawing for it, when I heard a shout from the shore. A man was gesticulating and gyrating on the beach. 'Hey, look out!' he yelled. 'Wait till I row out and get it!'

"He dashed into the boathouse and brought out a rowboat. He rowed over and pushed the paddle within my reach, and I paddled back with him in my wake, feeling the way I used to when I tried to play hooky and got caught——"

"And what has all this got to do with hair pulling?" asked the other young woman rather restlessly.

"Oh, I'm coming to that. After he had helped me out of his canoe and dragged the lilies out, we looked at each other and laughed. He had the most delightful laugh and dark blue eyes and broad shoulders. And then he wanted to know if he couldn't carry the lilies home for me, and the first thing I knew we were wandering along through the woods and having a beautiful time."

"You didn't think of asking his name or where he came from before you went strolling through the country with him, I suppose?" suggested the girl who was doing the listening.

"Well, everything went along delightfully," proceeded the girl with the toque, "until just as we reached the farmhouse where I was staying. Then a nasty gust of wind came up—there hadn't been a breath of air stirring all day—and blew my hat off. And, my dear, it took my wig with it! You know I had to wear one because I didn't have any hair, and there I stood looking like a sheared sheep."

"He must have known how it was."

"I don't know what he knew or what he thought, for the minute he brought my hat back I flew into the house and the next day I skipped the country and came back home. I was so afraid I would see him again. Now you know why I want to have him pull my hair."

"Oh, Margaret, here he comes back again, right toward us—look, the tall one with the gray overcoat!"

"That man! Why, that's Sidney Hollister. I've known him for ages." Before the girl in the toque could stop her the other young woman had intercepted the young man and he was standing smiling down at them.

"Sidney, this is Helen Benedict, and she wants you to pull her hair, please," gurgled Margaret.

"Pull her hair——" the youth began amazedly, then a light dawned in his eyes as he held out his hand eagerly.

"Is it really you? Well, I think you ought to have your hair pulled for the way you treated me that day, and then skipped the country afterward without leaving a trace. I tried to bribe the people at your farmhouse——" He broke off and then began again. "I won't pull it here in public, but if you'll let Margaret bring me up to see you some day I'll be glad to give it a little tweak and call it square."

"Did you really think——"

"That you always wore a wig? Not for a minute—and anyway," audaciously, "you weren't such an awful eyesore without it."

* * *

An Unlucky Man.

Tom McNeal of Topeka, was talking to Abe Peters about luck, so Tom reports. Tom thought there was no such thing as luck, but Abe protested.

"Take the case of Ezra Boil," said Abe. "To begin with, think of his name. A name like that is hard enough luck to prove my contention, but Ezra lived up to it. When he was a baby he fell into the horse trough and was almost drowned. Then he got hold of a can of concentrated lye, and it took them four weeks to bring him round. He fell out of an apple tree when he was six, and broke both arms and a leg, and just as he was hobbling around again he went on a watermelon-stealing expedition with six other boys. The others got away, but the dog caught Ezra and chewed him up until the farmer came along, and he put on the finishing touches with a harness trace. He fell in love when he was 17 years old, spent all he had for buggy rides and candy for the red-cheeked object of his adoration—and she shook him and married another. A mule kicked him and broke six ribs. He had a lot of hogs, and they died of cholera on the identical day when hogs reached 7 cents a pound, live weight. He had a big crop of wheat, and a hailstorm came along and ruined it one hour after his hail-insurance policy had lapsed. He got $500 to make a payment on his land, put it in the bank, and the bank busted.

"A cyclone wrecked his house and barn and crippled all his family except his mother-in-law, who escaped unhurt. He bought four gold bricks and took some Confederate money in pay for two good horses.

"Then he died. When they were taking him to the cemetery the team pulling the hearse ran away going down hill and scattered the remains of Ezra along the side of the road.

"In the course of time his family marked his grave by an appropriate stone on which the stone cutter got the date of his birth wrong and misspelled his name in two places.

"And still you say there is no such thing as luck!"

* * *

Stuck To His Job.

Aunt Julia, Mrs. B——'s colored washerwoman, is a thrifty, respectable, and self-respecting representative of her race, but is unfortunate in having an utterly worthless scapegrace son, who lately served a richly deserved sentence in the penitentiary at Pittsburgh. Notwithstanding his disgrace, Aunt Julia is exceedingly proud of him, and misses no occasion of chanting his praises. Some time ago, on her weekly mission at the B——'s, she observed:

"Ah s'pose yo'all didn't know I'm gwine to hab my boy home for Christmas."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, ma'am, he done wrote yisterday he comin' home Tuesday."

"You must be very glad, Aunt Julia. How long has he been away?"

"Eighteen months. Ah tell you, honey, he 'jest stuck right to his job!"

WANT ADS

Want and Classified Advertising not less than 14 words accepted for insertion in the Ledger and Blade at 25 cents per word.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS wanted—in every city and town in the United States to sell newly patented window fixture, needed in every home. For particulars address A. M. Stackhouse, Stroudsburg, Penna.

PORTRAITS—Photo pillow tops, photo china plates, frames, sheet pictures, etc., at prices below the lowest and guaranteed. Rejects credited. Prompt shipments; 30 days' credit, catalogue and samples free. Jas C. Bailey Co., Desk L 2, Chicago.

$7.80 per 100, in cash; for collecting names and addresses everywhere; send stamp for full proposition; name territory wanted. United Advertising Co., Dep't A, La Grange, Texas.

AGENTS—It costs you nothing to give our line a trial, as we furnish you Book of Samples, Catalogue, etc., FREE, and Pay All Express Charges on your orders. Dress Goods, Embroideries, Suits, Skirts, etc. Now is the time to begin—write at once. Embroidery & Import Company, 1901 Pine street, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS getting rich selling our decorative specialties. $5 to $15 daily. Quick sales. Big profit. Credit given to reliable men and women. Write for money-making proposition and catalog. Lang Mail Order House, 1557 Wells street, Chicago.

AGENTS—Make $2.60 each selling our wonderful Luminous Crucifixes; nothing to sell six a day; absolutely new; shine all night in darkest room. Pioneer Portrait Co., 1258 West 53rd street, Chicago.

AGENTS—New Fiber Home Broom; Costs same as good broom; outlasts four; sold only by agents. Guaranteed. Hilker Mop Co., 1285 Grand ave., Chicago.

$2.50 per day paid man or woman. In each town to distribute free circulars and take orders for concentrated flavoring in tablets. J. S. Ziegler Co., 443 South Dearborn street, Chicago.

STARK BRO'S, Louisiana, Mo., Big Idea in tree selling. Best terms known to nursery world. Box 80.

AGENTS—Men and Women; sell guaranteed Hosiery. Credit plan helps you. The line that repeats. Exclusive agency to hustlers. Dept. B 1., Lehr Mfg. Co., Denver, Colo

AGENTS wanted—Send 25 cts. for 35 Post Card and one of each of our Catalogues with Agents Terms. A. S. Mankin & Co., Alexandria, Va

HELP WANTED

WANTED—Men and Women—For Government positions. $80.00 month. Annual vacations. Short hours. No "layoffs." Common education sufficient. Over 12,000 appointments coming. Influence unnecessary. Farmers eligible. Franklin Institute, Dep't 31, Rochester, N. Y.

LEARN the Barber Trade. Few weeks completes. We control many excellent positions. Tools given. Branches in all leading cities. For information regarding any one, write Dept. 19, Moler College, 738 South Wabash ave., Chicago, Ill.

GOVERNMENT Post Office Examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Write for booklet R. Patterson Civil Service School, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—Active man in each locality. To join this Society. And introduce our Memberships. Sick, accident, death benefits. All or spare time. Make $50 to $500 a month. Write. Box CM-293, Covington, Ky.

MALE HELP WANTED

BE EXPERT detective and investigator. Many waiting positions at big pay. Stamp for particulars. National Detective Agency, Dep't 468 B, Chicago.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

LADIES can make shields at home; $10 per 100; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Particulars for stamped addressed envelope. Eureka Co., Dept. 17, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

MAKE a comfortable living at home sewing plain seams. Any ordinary sewing machine. All or spare time work. No canvassing. Steady. Sewers wanted in each town. No triflers reply. State how much time can sew. Send ten cents for postage, samples, etc. Returned if not satisfactory. Home Sewers Company, New York Jobbers Sewing, "BL" Dept., Rehoboth, Delaware.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL

DRINK HABIT—Guaranteed home treatment three days—lifelong result. The only reliable. Book mailed free. Eddy, J. Woods, 524 Sixth avenue, M 356, New York, N. Y.

SALESLADIES WANTED

SALESLADY in every town for high grade Corsets, not sold in stores. Unexcelled Opportunity. References. Wade Co., Station L, New York.

REAL ESTATE

TRADE? Yes, anywhere. List your property. Get results. National Exchange, Box 72, Waterloo, Iowa.

FRUIT LANDS—Beautiful Kootenay Valley, B. C., 88 acres, sub-divided into 2 4-acre tracts, 11 of 5-acres and one of 25 acres. The 25-acre tract is improved, has dwelling, stable, ice-house, etc. All for a limited time at the low price of $6,000. Adjoining land held at $200 per acre. Will cost you nothing to write and investigate. Owner forced to realize thereon. ¼ cash, balance easy terms. Only six hours from Spokane, Wash. Pure water, ideal climate and very low taxes. Address D. B. Dulmage, Morgan Park, Illinois.

RAINCOATS

RAINCOATS from Manufacturer. Men's, Women's, $3.00 prepaid. Superior Coat Co., East 15th, New York.

VIOLINS

STRADIVARIUS Violin for sale cheap. Excellent sweet toned. Miss Bertha Mardisee, Route 5, Rosedale, Kansas.

AMUSEMENTS

SEND 10c for two Standard Puzzles. Receive free two card, two coin tricks, two joke novelties, apparatus and catalogues. Puzzle Works, 24 H, Eugenie street, Chicago.

MISCELLANEOUS

ICELESS Icebox. Build it yourself. Costs next to nothing. No expense afterwards. Greatest boon to housewife ever invented. $1.00 for plan and particulars. Iceless Cooling Co., 305 Columbia, Duluth, Minn.

BARGAIN—Three fine neckties $1. Gold-plated Pin free. Ties and pin retail at $2.50. This offer is for short time only. Send $1 at once. Money refunded by return mail if not satisfied. Name colors desired. W. C. Watkins, Parnassus, Pa.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

YOUR advertisement placed in nearly fifty magazines. Three Months, 5 cts. per word. A. S. Mankin & Co., Alexandria, Va.

TYPEWRITERS

Typewriters—All makes, $16 up. Free trial. Guaranteed two years. Express prepaid. Francke Payne Company, Rosedale Station, Kansas City, Kansas.

PERSONAL

MARRY—Interesting particulars (Free). Thousands Rich, all ages, tired living alone. Write, Mrs. Hyde, 2642 Mission, San Francisco, California.

FORTUNE told, send 10 cents and birthdate. Mme. Evaline, Kewanee, Ill., 101 Lexington avenue.

MARRIAGE Paper; Highest Character; Incorporated; 16th year; 5,000 members; paper sealed; send 10c. B. W. Love, Box 1500, Denver, Colo.

MARRY Rich—Matrimonial paper of highest character, containing hundreds of photos and descriptions of marriageable people with means; mailed free, sealed; either sex. Write. One may be your ideal. Standard Cor. Club, Box 607, Grays Lake, Illinois.

MARRY—Photos, descriptions and P. O. addresses of prosperous ladies and gents, want to marry, free. H. Jahn, St. Paul, Minn.

MARRIAGE Paper Free; best published for sure results; reliable. Eastern Agency 55, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

MARRY wealth and beauty. Marriage Directory Free. Pay when married. New plan. Ladies send description in first letter. Box 314 A., Kansas City, Mo.

MARRY—Book of descriptions and photos mailed sealed. FREE. The Exchange, Box 525 B., Kansas City, Mo.

LOVINE never fails. Every package guaranteed. Either sex 10c. Two packages sealed 20c. Union, Box 1000N, Palatine, Illinois.

MARRY—Many rich, congenial and anxious for companions. Interesting particulars and photo Free. The Messenger, Sta. D, Grand Rapids, Mich.

MARRY: Catalogue with photos and description Free. Pay if suited. Select Club, Dept. 672, Kalamazoo, Mich.

FREE Life Reading—Grance Medium. Send birthdate and dime. Dr. Smith, Dep't 38, Marion, Mich.

I TELL your future by handwriting. Send birthdate and dime. Madame Walker, 506 W. 146 st., New York City.

AGENTS WANTED

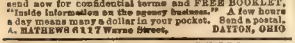
AGENTS Here It Is

POCKET SEWING MACHINE

That's what Ed Hopper calls it. Sold 67 in few days He's pleased. Retails at ridiculously low price. **100% PROFIT** If you want a quick seller, one that gets the money easy, send now for confidential terms and FREE BOOKLET, "Inside Information on the agency business." A few hours a day means many a dollar in your pocket. Send a postal, A. MATHEWS 6117 Wayne Street, DAYTON, OHIO

Bull Moose, Wilson and Taft Buttons, 4c

Everybody excited and anxious to show who they are for in this exciting Presidential Campaign. Wilson and Taft buttons are silver metal flags with the names in raised letters. Roosevelt button is a big Bull Moose of oxidized copper. Finely finished; strongly made. Millions will be sold. Send 4c for your choice of sample and wholesale prices. Agents wanted. Address ELLIS ART COMPANY, Dept. 302, 538 Lawndale Ave., CHICAGO



AGENTS

Exclusive Control of Territory and **100% PROFIT**

Transparent Handled Novelty Knives with name, address, photo, lodge emblem, etc., showing under the handle. Superior quality. Lightning sellers. We show you how to make $75 to $200 profit a month. Will give you permanent employment for years to come. A rare chance. Act quick. Write today for terms and special outfit offer.

Campaign Knives with Candidates' Pictures Now Ready

Novelty Cutlery Co., Box 23, Canton, Ohio

$35 to $60—not now and then, but **EVERY WEEK;** as exclusive agent for our snappy, fast-selling, high demand line of necessities. There is no flim-flam about this—it is a strictly square, clean, guaranteed proposition with a large manufacturing concern. Drop us a card for quick action. We can use both men and women.

AMERICAN ALUMINUM MFG. CO., Div. 717, Lemont, Ills.

Both Suited.

Costigan—Don't say you "ain't done nothin'."

Madigan—An' why not?

Costigan—Because that isn't good English.

Madigan—Faith, I'm glad to hear it; for, by the powers, naythер am I.

Cause for Regret.

Lady—I don't like this picture so well as I did the last one you took of me.

Photographer—Ah, madam, I have not the artistic taste that I had when I was young; and, besides, my camera is getting old.

AGENTS My Sanitary Coffee Maker produces pure, sweet coffee, needs no settler and never wears out. Saves coffee, money and health. Every wife buys a night. new invention; exclusive territory. Send 15c. for 50c. size postpaid.

DR. LYONS, 2201 Locust St., Box B, St. Louis, Mo.

PATENT BOOKS MAILED FREE—showing 100 mechanical movements invaluable to inventors and mechanics—and telling what is patentable, how to obtain patent or partner, etc. Free on request. CHAS. E. BROCK, 713 Eighth St., WASHINGTON, D. C.

SOAP AGENTS Our Hygienic Vegetable Oil Soap beats everything for quick sales and big profits. Build up a business of your own. We protect you in territory. Full size cake free. Morgan Supply Company, Dept. 200, St. Louis, Mo.

LADIES Make $3 to $5 Daily Selling Dress Goods, Skirts and Handkerchiefs. Free Outfit. No capital required. Mutual Fabric Co., Dept. 418 Binghamton, N.Y.

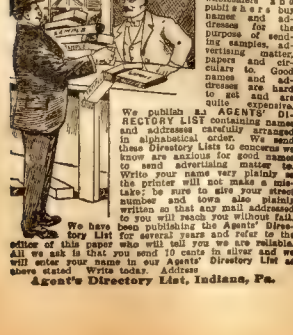
DON'T ACCEPT an agency until you get my samples and particulars. MONEY MAKERS Address SALESMAN 604 Security Building, St. Louis Mo.

"THE BIRTH OF THE NEW PARTY" Greatest political book of the Century. Retail $1. To Agents 50c. Sample postpaid 10c. Send quick. Make $25 daily. Nichols & Co., Naperville, Ill.

TOBACCO FACTORY WANTS SALESMEN Good Pay, steady Work and Promotion. Experience unnecessary as we give Complete Instructions Piedmont Tobacco Co., Sta. 44, Danville, Va.

BIG MAIL FREE!

POST OFFICE



Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? You probably know that manufacturers, supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to. Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an AGENTS' DIRECTORY LIST containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to mail printing matter to. Write your name very plainly as the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. We have been publishing the Agents' Directory List for several years and refer to the office of this paper who will tell you we are reliable. All we ask is that you send 10 cents in silver and we will enter your name in our Agents' Directory List as above stated. Write today. Address

Agent's Directory List, Indiana, Pa.

ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

An Important Person.

Persons who pretend to come from New York City should be prepared to prove their boast by evincing familiarity with what genuine New Yorkers would necessarily know. Mr. J. B. Kerfoot, the author, tells how he was once unmasked by one who had never even seen the metropolis.

Luke Bushee was a Chippewa Indian who drove the driest of birch-bark canoes through the sparkling waters of Lake Nepigon. Luke's idea of a metropolis was a little village on the Canadian Pacific consisting of the railroad station, the agent's bungalow, a few shanties and a place of occasional refreshment known as a hotel.

It was my first trip with Luke. Of late there had been signs that the ice of aboriginal reserve was breaking up. Finally, under the influence of a roaring fire, the last barriers gave way, and Luke asked a question:

"You live in New York?"

"Yes, Luke."

"You know Ba'tis' Michell?"

"No, I don't think I ever heard of him."

Silence for several minutes. Then, with the subtle rising inflection of incredulity:

"You live in New York?"

"Yes, Luke."

"You not know Ba'tis' Michell?"

"No, Luke; I never heard of him."

"Huh! that's funny." Then, as one who convicts you out of your own mouth, he added:

"He's the cook at the hotel."

The Finger System.

From his easy chair Mr. Compton watched his wife putting on a pair of tan gloves. "Aren't they too large for you?" he asked lazily.

"Oh, no, not for shopping gloves," said Mrs. Compton, and with her fingers on the table she ran a scale up and down several times. "I have to be able to do that, you see," she explained.

"Do finger exercises? What for?" asked Mr. Compton. "Those aren't finger exercises." Mrs. Compton's color deepened as, taking off the gloves, she began to smooth and stretch the fingers. "Those are—why, they're calculations, Henry. Don't you see, if I start downtown with ten dollars, and go to the silk counter and find two lovely remnants, one for three dollars and one for four and a half, I want to reckon up at once, underneath the counter, how much they'll come to, and how much I'll have left. And last week I missed a great bargain because I had on some tight gloves and I couldn't reckon. I hadn't expected to go to the sale."

"Ah," said Mr. Compton. "Why not ask the clerk to reckon it for you?"

"Henry!" cried his wife. "At a bargain counter! The clerk! Why, nobody but a man would ever think of such a thing for a minute!"

Looked Like It.

Senator Raymond was condemning the argument of a political opponent.

"This man," he said, "misunderstood me as completely as the little boy misunderstood the ear trumpet.

"One Sunday morning in church as the hymn was beginning he saw a man take an ear trumpet from his bosom and clasp it to his ear.

"'Oh, ma, look,' he whispered excitedly to his mother, 'that there gentleman must be goin' to play by ear!'"

A Bad Debt.

The mosquito lit on the sleeping man,
And looked for a place to drill.
"The world owes me a living," he said,
And at once sent in his bill.

An Obliging Young Man.

A farmer boy and his best girl were seated in a buggy one evening in town, watching the people pass. Near by was a popcorn vendor's stand.

Presently the lady remarked: "My! that popcorn smells good!"

"That's right," said the gallant. "I'll drive a little closer, so you can smell it better."

Something Had Happened.

Secretary of the Navy Meyer had some funny experiences when he was in the diplomatic service.

While he was at Rome an American tourist called on him.

"Have you been to Pompeii?" asked Mr. Meyer of his visitor.

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "and it was very strange and interesting. I think something must have happened there; the blessed place was mostly ruins!"

Doubtful Meaning.

He—"So you lost that handsome little dog you had?"

She—"Yes, in a railroad accident. I was saved, but the dog was killed."

He—"What a pity!"

Harrigan's Parrot Story.

The late Ned Harrigan, of Harrigan & Hart fame, was a great story-teller, and liked nothing better than to gather a congenial lot about him in some rathskeller and entertain them. His parrot story is one of his best.

"An Irishman by the name of Burke ran a bird-and-goldfish store in the Bowery and was noted for his wit and the funny things he taught his parrots to say. One day a man came in who stuttered very badly and says to Burke:

"'I want t-to-o b-buy a p-p-p-ar-r-ot!'

"'All roight, sir,' says Burke, 'I hev a foine bi-r-d here for twinty dollars.'

"'C-a-an he-t-t-t-a-alk?' asked the man.

"'Well, be gorry,' says Burke, 'if he couldn't talk better than ye can I'd cut his dommed head off.'"

Since John Quit Drinking

By John's Wife

Used Golden Remedy, The Great Home Treatment For Drunkards.

Odorless and Tasteless—Any Lady Can Give It Secretly At Home In Tea, Coffee Or Food.

Costs Nothing to Try.

If you have a husband, son, brother, father or friend who is a victim of liquor, all you have to do is to send your name and address on the coupon below. You may be thankful as long as you live that you did it.

FREE TRIAL PACKAGE COUPON

Dr. J. W. Haines Company,
3132 Glenn Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Please send me, absolutely free, by return mail, in plain wrapper, so that no one can know what it contains, a trial package of Golden Remedy to prove that what you claim for it is true in every respect.

Name .....
Street .....
City .....
State .....

KIDNEY SPECIALIST

Thirty years' success in treating diseases of the **Kidneys** and **Urinary** system—including **Rupture. Progressive, safe, painless methods.** If afflicted with any Urinary, Kidney or Chronic ailment you need my book, it gives symptoms and cure. Postage 4 cents. **Name your disease.**

DR. ROWE, 110 N. Pearl St., M, Buffalo, N.Y.

Clothing Salesmen Wanted

$150.00 Per Month and expenses made by all our active men selling our popular line of clothing. **No experience necessary—no capital required**—no commission plan—no house to house canvass. You regulate your profits to suit yourself. This is high grade employment at high wages.

Nearly All Our Men Make $40.00 Every Week in the Year

Our Plan: We ship by prepaid express big outfit of cloth samples, lithograph fashion plates, tape measure, order blanks, advertising matter, **everything free.** We operate the largest mills in the U.S. and sell goods cheaper than any other house in the **world.** Finest tailored, all wool suits, $7.50 up. No difficulty getting orders at these prices. **Everything guaranteed.** Don't buy a suit or overcoat anywhere at any price until you see our amazing offer and biggest, lowest priced clothing line in U.S.

THE OLD WOOLEN MILLS CO. Adams and Market Sts. Department 801 CHICAGO

FREE *Something Absolutely New* FREE

We will give a pair of these fine

PATENT TENSION SHEARS FREE

with one year's subscription to

THE SATURDAY BLADE

A new invention—a pair of shears with a Tension Spring attachment which enables the user to set the Shears for cutting **any kind of material with ease.**

The Shears are seven inches long and the patent device **keeps them always sharp and in perfect cutting condition.**

No matter how many pairs of shears or scissors you have, you need a pair of these with the Tension Spring. After you use them once you will never go back to the old fashioned kind. They are perfectly finished and full nickel plated and the **Manufacturers' Guarantee Certificate accompanies every pair.**

One year's subscription to **The Saturday Blade** costs you only $1.00. If you subscribe now you will get the **Blade** every week for a year for the dollar and a pair of these Patent Tension Shears **free of charge,** shipping charges prepaid.

Send your subscription to

W. D. BOYCE CO.
76 Dearborn Ave., Chicago, Ill.

CANADA SUBSCRIPTION RATE $1.50 PER YEAR.

Fat Reduced 73 Pounds

Mrs. Wright Got Thinner and Healthier Every Day.

The friends of Blanche Wright, the widely-known and popular entertainer, were amazed at observing her as she gradually became thinner until reduced to an agreeable figure. She had become decidedly fat in the course of a few years and now she gradually lost weight until the scales proved she had got rid of 73 pounds of superfluous fat.

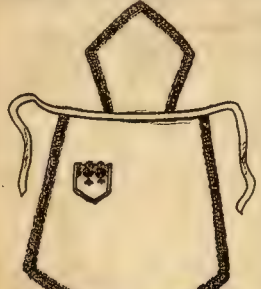
She is a busy, ambitious woman and had tried various methods of reducing weight, all in vain. Mrs. Wright took pills that were advertised and which she got at drug stores, she tried a "drugless" treatment and dieting, rubbed various things on her body and experimented with numerous other remedies without success. But at last she found just what she sought, a genuine self-treatment method that any fat person of either sex can easily follow. It is a safe and reliable way to get thin. This riddance of fat improves the health, beautifies the figure and lengthens life. Any reader who would like to know the secret can learn it free of cost by writing to Mrs. Blanche Wright, 1017 B, Waterloo, Ind. Better enclose a stamp for her reply. She has nothing to sell.

These 4 RINGS FREE
Send your name and address and we will send you 12 Beautiful Oriental Rings to sell at 10 cents each. All the rage in New York. When sold return us $1 20 and get these four Solid Gold Laid Rings Free, also our 20-page premium catalog listing 100 premiums and how to get them. SCHNEIDER CO., 784 Orient St., Palmyra, Pa.

MONEY Made quickly by smart men. T. Artol Co., 115 Nassau St., N.Y.

THESE Beautiful Aprons FREE

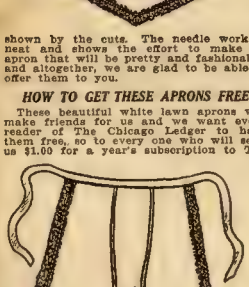
Tea aprons are always in great demand, but tea aprons as beautifully patterned as these will make our women readers proud and happy. These are special designs, manufactured by New York's leading fancy goods producers and are made with great care of the most delicate white lawn—one having a center panel that is a very elaborate creation of embroidery, the other being of the very popular style of bib and small pocket as



shown by the cuts. The needle work is neat and shows the effort to make an apron that will be pretty and fashionable, and altogether, we are glad to be able to offer them to you.

HOW TO GET THESE APRONS FREE

These beautiful white lawn aprons will make friends for us and we want every reader of The Chicago Ledger to have them free, so to every one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription to The



Chicago Ledger we will send prepaid, these two beautiful lawn embroidered aprons

ABSOLUTELY FREE.

We will treat old and new subscribers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber send in a dollar and we will extend your subscription one year from the time it now expires. Many are getting these aprons for gifts to their friends. Send your order today and be sure to ask for the aprons and also mention whether it is a new or renewal subscription.

Our Boys' Corner

The Stolen Million

Or, JED BRONSON'S LEGACY

By Captain Jack Judson

[Copyright 1912 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 32, August 10. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN THIEVES FALL OUT.

JED BRONSON, secure in the chair in the upper room back of number 446 Baxter street, waited for the doom which he felt impended. He had fallen into the hands of the precious pair of rascals who had filched the million-dollar legacy, and he knew there was nothing too desperate for them.

If Ned but knew! But Ned could not know, for the capture had been made without his knowledge, and Ned was waiting for his return from the Hotel Charlotte. It was in vain that Jed tested his bonds. Oyster Jim and the Major had taken no chances. They saw that if Jed was left at large their possession of the million might suddenly terminate, and it was the destruction of the young heir that stood them in need.

No sounds came up the stair after the departure of the villains. The lights beyond the window grew stronger as the night deepened and Jed could but await his fate with the best grace he could assume.

If he could have looked beyond the door after the departure of his enemies his face might have grown whiter still. He would have seen Oyster Jim take a match from his pocket and apply its lighted end to a fuse which he had carried down the flight.

"It'll burn for half an hour," said Jim with a look into the merciless face of his companion. "That will give the youngster time to make his peace. And the beauty of the whole thing is, Major, no one will ever know just how it happened. The old place is a fire trap and will burn like tinder."

The Major grinned viciously. The little fuse sputtered and a spark ran upward.

"That's it!" laughed Jim, as he watched the crawling spark for a minute. "Now let's be off. The fuse will do the rest."

Leaving Jed to his fate, the pair slipped away and disappeared on the street. Not long afterward they entered a house the upper room of which was well, almost expensively, furnished.

"I guess we can bank on the swag for good," observed Jim, as he seated himself and looked around. "Cully got his last under the automobile, the Rosedale boy will soon be ashes, and we've won the game."

"But you don't seem to reckon on Boston Kyle," put in the Major.

"Oh," cried Jim, "he'll give up when the country boy is not to be found, but if he shouldn't——"

"What if he shouldn't?"

"You know what we do when that occurs," grinned Oyster Jim maliciously.

"Yes. Now we'll make the divide. You've got the stuff with you?"

Jim took from his pocket a large package which he laid on the table, but took good care to keep his powerful hand on it.

"'Pears to me," he said in low tones, as he transferred his gaze from the packet to the Major who sat opposite him, "you've about had your share for the risk you took."

A most singular expression swept over the Major's face. "I was to have half," said he with a spurt.

"But," growled Oyster Jim, "I'm the man who did the job. I'm the fellow who took the risk. I might have got my last dose in the hotel that night."

"From two young jays?" sneered the Major. "They didn't have a single weapon."

Jim's hand seemed to tighten on the package.

"I say I took risks just the same," he returned, abating none of his determined looks. "You've got a pretty good share of the loot. I've handed you thirty thousand, and now——"

"Stop!"

The Major's eyes seemed suddenly to blaze. He leaned across the table and centered his gaze upon his companion.

"You're not going to play fair?" he began, with a vicious snap.

"I'm going to have the lion's share for the risk I took," was the answer.

"And cheat your old pal?"

"Look here," and Jim settled back in his chair, drawing the package after him. "You've got to take what I give you, Major."

There was no answer to these words. The Major knew there is little honor among thieves; he did not care to rouse the lion in the desperate crook whose pal he had been for years. Jim was a cyclone of passion when he could not have his way.

"I'll be liberal," continued the man with the crooked finger. "I will play fair."

He leaned forward and opened the packet of bonds. One by one he separated them and laid them near him. He was watched like a hawk by his companion.

"There," said he, looking up into the anxious face on the other side of the table. "That's your share, Major."

The dumpy man drew the bonds toward him and silently inspected them. All at once he shoved them back to his companion.

"I don't want 'em," he growled.

"But they're good."

"Yes, but you've kept more than half a million for yourself."

"Sure I have. I did the work."

"It was to be share and share alike," Jim, with the coolness of the practiced crook, raked the papers toward him, and transferred the whole to his capacious pocket. The Major's face became crimson.

"You want all for doing nothing?" snapped Oyster Jim. "All you did was to meet Cully at the ferry and take him to Meg's. And the boy got away later on."

"Wasn't it well for us that he did get away. He will never peach now! The automobile settled that."

Jim took a hasty stride across the room, and when he came back his companion was startled by the glitter in his eyes.

"You can take what I've offered you or nothing," the crook hissed.

"Then I'll take nothing, but you must look out for the future."

The threat in the last words was not lost on the king of crooks. He threw a rapid glance toward the door, which was shut. The Major was still seated.

"Are you going to bite?" he cried, leaning over his pal. "Are you going to betray Oyster Jim?"

It was look for look and there was no other reply. All at once Jim's hand descended like a powerful hammer upon the Major's shoulder.

"I don't want snakes in the grass about me!" Jim flashed. "You are going to be one."

The Major tried to wrest himself free from the clutch of that hand, but it was a clutch not to be broken.

"They think you dead," he said, returning Jim's impetuous stare.

"I know that."

"Boston Kyle may be deceived as to that."

"Traitor!" roared Jim, and then his voice sank back to a serpent's hiss. "You will never betray me, Major!"

The short man was wrenched from the chair before he could divine his companion's intentions, and yet the glittering eyes should have warned him. Despite his slimness Oyster Jim was powerful. He caught the Major by the throat and forced him across the room. Not a word was spoken. The little man's eyes seemed to bulge from his head. Jim's grip tightened. He exerted all his strength and jammed the Major's head against the wall until blood trickled toward the floor.

"Now will you take your share?" he cried, throwing the limp body into the chair.

There was no reply. Oyster Jim stooped over the inanimate object that confronted him and stared. His face lost color.

"Oh," he suddenly exclaimed. "I guess he won't peach now."

The crook drew off, and for a few moments gazed sharply at the man in the chair. The round little body did not stir. Jim had been a crook from boyhood, but he had never committed murder—never till this hour.

At last he pulled himself together and avoided the man in the chair. He gathered up a few things about the room, and then looked through the Major's pockets. When he was through he went out, locking the door behind him. He never looked back as he descended to the street below. What guided his feet into Baxter street he could not tell. Perhaps he wanted to see if the fuse which he had lit had accomplished its mission.

"Well, it failed!"

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He could not hold back the words which fell from his tongue at a certain point. He had stopped and was staring at a house which rose before him.

"I'd like to know why the fuse failed," he said to himself. "The coast is clear. I'll investigate."

Oyster Jim went forward after a rapid inspection of the immediate vicinity. He had pulled his hat over his eyes, but those little eyes, fox-like in their nature, saw almost everything. His foot was on the step of number 446 when a slight noise in his rear saluted his ear.

"Never mind, Jim. Don't make a fuss," said a voice. "The fuse went out."

The man with the crooked finger had the quickness of a cat. For him to see was to act. He sprang back, threw out his hands, and gathered himself together for a leap.

"Don't, Jim," admonished the same stern voice, and the crook was looking into the muzzle of Boston Kyle's revolver.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT CULLY TOLD THE BOOK.

In one of the wards of the accident hospital a boy was sitting up on a white cot. He was bandaged and his arm was in a sling. Out of the window he looked with wistful eyes, and his ears caught the many sounds that came in at the open window wooing him, as it were, back to his old haunts in the great city.

By the narrowest chance he had escaped death from the racing machine that had struck him down as he was trying to emancipate himself from dangers which threatened him at the hands of two of the most graceless scamps that ever lived.

Now and then he turned his head wearily, and a wan smile passed over his face. Cully Mahone, the street waif, had been tenderly cared for at the hospital. With the best of medical attention he had been held back from the brink of doom, and his attendants said that in time the old color would come back to his cheeks and he would be strong once more.

A nurse sat beside the cot watching him carefully, and now and then the boy caught her look and smiled.

"I promised to tell no living person," said Cully, suddenly. "I took a solemn oath to that effect."

"You promised not to tell what?" asked the nurse.

"Don't you see I can't tell you?" answered the boy. "That wouldn't be right for I would be breaking my oath."

"If it was a bad vow——"

"I just had to take it," was the interruption. "I was to tell no living person. That's it."

"Then you are going to keep your vow?"

"Oh, I must," smiled Cully. "Would you mind fetching me, say, a book?"

"But the doctor said you must not read," the nurse replied.

"I don't want to read," was the quick rejoinder. "I never read much, anyhow. You see I've lived by my wits, and that kept me busy. Mayn't I have the book?"

The nurse went away, and presently returned with a book, which she placed in the boy's lap. His eyes brightened.

"I'm going to talk to the book," said Cully. "It's not a living person, you know, nurse?"

"I see."

Cully passed his unbandaged hand across his face.

"Now Mr. Book," he began. "I'm going to tell you a story. My name is Cully Mahone. I'm no better than anybody else and I've had a hard fight for life. I don't remember my father and mother. I guess they just couldn't keep me, and let me drift hither and yon on the tide. Well, I've been drifting ever since I can remember. It was pretty hard to keep from the rocks, and I could hardly keep my head above water.

"One day I fell in with Oyster Jim. I didn't know the man was bad till he had me fairly in his net, and then I was tied to him by so many bad deeds that I couldn't break away. I was just Cully Mahone, and hadn't the snap to get out of Oyster Jim's power. The man had a pal whom he called Major. I never heard his other name. I don't think he is as bad as Oyster Jim, but the Major is pretty bad, for all that.

"I was asleep in Oyster Jim's place one night when he came home. I saw he was excited, and when he jerked me out of bed and plumped me into a chair he began to talk. 'Kin you be what you ain't?' he says to me. I stared at Jim, for I didn't know what he meant. 'I've got in my hands the biggest thing I ever struck,' he went on. 'It was an accident, but it's big all the same.' 'What is it, Jim?' said I. He took two letters from his pocket and spread them out upon the table. I was so excited, and didn't do anything but look at Jim. Presently the Major came in, and the two pals put their heads together and grinned.

"'You've got to be Jed Bronson, of Rosedale,' Jim suddenly went on. 'You've got to take these letters down to the law office of Judd & Jerrold, and tell them that you've come for your legacy.' 'But I can't do that,' I cried, for I began to see it wasn't right. 'I can't be Jed Bronson, because I'm Cully Manone.' The pals laughed, and then Jim's face got very stern. 'If you don't,' cried he, 'you'd soon cease to be Cully Mahone or anybody else.' I knew that when Jim talked that way there was danger. Then he gave me full instructions, and I promised to carry out his scheme.

"The next day I was on the street. At first I thought of throwing the letters into the river, but all at once the old fear of Oyster Jim and the Major came back. They had given me a suit of new clothes, and made me up like a country boy. I laughed at myself when I looked into the cracked looking glass that hangs on Jim's wall. I had lost Cully Mahone somewhere. I don't believe any of the gutter rats would have known me, I looked so different.

"My heart was in my throat when I opened the door of Judd & Jerrold's office. I had never been in such a place before. When one of the men had read the letters he looked surprised, and both of them shook hands with me. 'It's a big pile,' said one of the men. I wanted to ask what he meant, but I thought of Jim and kept my tongue. Pretty soon the lawyer went to the big safe in one corner of the office, and took out a lot of papers. My eyes nearly jumped from my head when he counted out a roll of money which he said had belonged to my benefactor. It all seemed a dream to me. I had to sign a paper which he said was a receipt, and when I had signed I got away as soon as I could. I was afraid that if I stayed longer I would be said that I was Cully Mahone and not Jed Bronson. I didn't know what I had.

"When I got back to where Jim and the Major was, they nearly went wild. They said it was the slickest way of getting a million they had ever heard of. The Major said that Jim's visit to the hotel Charlotte was a paying one. They gave me a lot of money, and told me to keep the secret if I valued my life. I couldn't sleep for thinking of it. At last I told Jim that I thought I had done wrong, that I had cheated some boy out of his fortune, and that started Jim. Then it was that he made me take the oath never to tell a living person what I had done. He wasn't satisfied with that, but he sent me over to Jersey where the Major met me, and I was handed over to a woman called Meg, who said that I must stay with her. That's what I got for being Jed Bronson.

"I didn't like Meg, and to be cooped up was ag'in my principles," continued Cully, after a brief pause. "I made my escape and came back to New York, where I was struck by the automobile. I thought I saw Jim on the street, and I guess that is why I ran into danger. Now, Mr. Book, I haven't told a living person about the base trick I played. I guess you'll keep the secret. Jim and the Major evidently think the machine finished me, and they'll cut high jinks with the money that belongs to Jed Bronson, whoever he is. If ever I meet Jed, I'll beg his forgiveness, and I'm not going to be bad any more. Mebbe when I get out of the hospital I'll find a job where Jim can't reach me. That's all."

Cully handed the book back to the nurse with a satisfied look.

"Remember," said he, "I've talked to the book. My oath says I was to tell no living person about the trick. I guess I'll go to sleep now."

All through the day Cully Mahone slept peacefully. His story seemed to have exhausted him. When he awoke he looked up, and entered his gaze upon a man who stood beside the cot.

"Cully?" said this person, kindly.

"That's me," smiled the boy.

"I'm Boston Kyle," was the reply.

"Oh, the man I've heard Oyster Jim and the Major talk about."

"Yes."

"I don't know you, Mr. Kyle, but I can't tell you anything, for you are a living person."

The detective smiled.

"I understand," he said. "The book couldn't keep your secret, Cully."

"I just thought mebbe it couldn't," grinned the boy. "But don't let Oyster Jim and the Major know."

"The Major will never know anything. Jim is in the toils——"

"What! Have you nipped him?"

"That's what I have."

"And the swag?"

"Jed Bronson's got it."

Cully's face lit up as with a ray of sunshine.

"Then was surely a talking book, Mr. Kyle!" cried Cully. "I want to see Jed Bronson some day."

"You shall, my boy. But we want you to see Oyster Jim first."

Cully shrank back upon his cot and his wan face grew ashen.

"Just to identify him, that's all," assured the detective. "Jim is past all harming of you."

"But what's to become of Cully Mahone?" the boy asked.

"Jed says he'll take care of all that," laughed Boston.

"My, but that's good of Jed Bronson!" cried Cully. "I'll have to apologize to Judd & Jerrold, too. Say?"

"Well?"

"Just think of it! I was a millionaire for half an hour. Hully gee! What if I had sloped with the swag? But what would Cully Mahone have done with the pile? I'd have made lots of the street kids happy for the rest o' their lives. Think of it—picture shows, auto rides, the parks, trips to Coney, and the like!"

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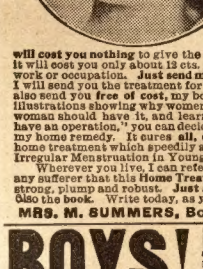

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and the boy fell back on the pillows and laughed till his cheeks reddened.

But before his merriment ended, Boston Kyle had stolen away with a satisfied look at the white-capped nurse.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF THE GAME.

"So you're going back tomorrow?"

Boston Kyle shook the ashes from his pipe and looked across the table at Jed.

"We shall be glad to get back to Rosedale," was the response. "It isn't all fun going after a million."

The detective gave a little laugh.

"If Oyster Jim's fuse hadn't sputtered out, there'd not be two boys to go back," he commented.

"You are right."

"You boys will have to return when Jim's trial comes off. Of course, we've got the goods on the biggest scamp in ten cities, but after all, the game was worth the candle." He looked at his watch. "Cully ought to be here by this time. Ah, there he is now!"

The door opened half timidly, and Cully Mahone entered. The boy looked from Boston and rested his eyes upon Jed, who rose and crossed the room with outstretched hand.

"You're welcome, Cully," he said, his whole soul brimming over with pleasure. "Boston has told me about the book that could not keep a secret."

The face of the street boy flushed.

"That was one book that couldn't, anyhow," he smiled, returning Jed's look, as he grasped the welcome hand. "I'll never be a millionaire again."

"But you'll be something just as noble —my friend," responded Dannemar's heir. "What do you want to be, Cully?"

"Anything but Oyster Jim's pal," was the reply.

"You'll go back to Rosedale with Ned and me," pursued Jed. "You've but to name the position you want."

"I'm going to talk to the book!"

"Shucks!" cried Cully Mahone. "I tried to rob you. I was the one who pulled Jim's chestnuts from the fire——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Jed. "I've forgotten all that long ago. Say you'll go to Rosedale."

"I'll go, but I'll miss the city," blushed Cully.

"I'd like to know if I haven't a right to have a word or two," said a voice, as the door opened again.

Jed started.

"You're welcome here, Miss Orton!" he exclaimed. "I was just inviting Cully to the country."

"Is she going with us?" blurted the street boy, staring at the beautiful stenographer till his eyes seemed on the point of protruding from their sockets.

"Come," laughed the girl. "I've not been invited, and I couldn't leave the city anyway, as I've just been offered my old place with Judd & Jerrold, accompanied by Phineas Judd's profound apology. He admits that there was no leak in the office. It was Oyster Jim's keen eyes that did the whole thing."

"And my hands that swiped the million," laughed Cully.

That night Miss Ivy Orton was suddenly confronted by Samson Jerrold, who stammered as he offered his hand.

"The new house is going to be a caution," he cried, his face flushing. "I wish you would run up some time and inspect it, Miss Ivy."

"I prefer to let the future Mrs. Jerrold do that," responded the girl, naively. "I might suggest some improvements that would not be to her notion."

"Then you don't intend to become Mrs. Samson Jerrold?"

The big-hearted lawyer's face suddenly assumed a woebegone expression.

"There! don't go on," he cried, holding up his hand. "A miss is as good as a mile every time. You're going to take the old office job, aren't you?"

"Yes, and with thanks to you, Mr. Jerrold."

Samson dropped his gaze to the floor.

"I'll have to look for another bird for the new nest," he said, a moment later. "Some one else seems to have a bird in the hand," and with this he picked up his hat and bowed himself out.

In the course of days the last act, so far as our story goes, was played through. Oyster Jim was tried for a greater crime than stealing a cool million. The keen detective wove around him a network of guilt, and he had to answer for the murder of his pal, the Major. It was a brutal deed, and when Justice had taken her course there was no crook to oppose her verdict, for the man with the crooked finger—the first link in the deadly chain—had paid the awful penalty for his crime.

A year later a well-dressed youth swung his chair around in a well-appointed office and greeted another youth who had just entered the room.

"How's business, Mr. Mahone?" inquired the visitor.

"Ho! it's not Cully now!" grinned the boy at the desk. "Well, sir," he assumed a business air, "the brokerage firm of Bronson & Mahone is in the swim. The boys are taking stock in the house and are saving their money for safe investments. Kiddy Black brought in five new investors this morning, and Danny Fitch of the old Bowery—it used to be Mackerel Danny—will be around tomorrow. This is better than swiping a million, Jed, and then, it's more honest."

Both youths laughed.

"By the way," observed Jed, suddenly becoming sober, "I've got an option on the old Hotel Charlotte, and I'm going to build a Boys' Home on the site."

"And I'll furnish all the reading matter," put in Cully. "I'll put the 'talking book' on the topmost shelf with the compliments of C. Mahone."

The unexpected happened. The old hotel where Jed and Ned had had their startling adventure was razed, and the new Home became a success. It is one of the prominent institutions of the great city today, and nearly everybody has heard of its beginnings.

"The more I see of that girl the more I realize what I missed," reflected Samson Jerrold, one afternoon when Miss Ivy left the office after her daily work. "But there could be no other outcome. When I heard that she had sent twenty dollars for expenses and had signed herself 'A Sympathetic Friend,' I feared the jig was up. I say Mr. Jerrold, you'll have to look for another bird for the uptown cage!" and with this he lapsed into meditative silence.

Ned has since been given a good situation in the boy broker's office, and is becoming a well known figure in financial circles. Of course Jed did not obtain all his legacy, for the spendthrifts, Jim and the unfortunate Major, had squandered a part of it, but there was enough left, and if the unexpected does not happen, Miss Ivy Orton will some day resign her position in Judd & Jerrold's office and become the mistress of a mansion as handsome as that which the senior member of the firm had designed for her. Boston Kyle was amply rewarded for his good detective work and has left the force to take up other pursuits less dangerous and more to his liking.

"It took that crooked finger to convince me that Oyster Jim wasn't as dead as he let on," he has more than once remarked. "After this I won't believe a man is dead till I've seen him put under the ground. I can say this of Jim now, for I was in at the death, but it was a close call for the boy who inherited old Dannemar's million."

The End.

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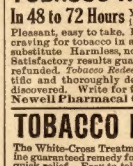

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A Bride's Blunder.

To the bride who is new before a range, says the Kansas City Journal, her first biscuit is a most serious undertaking. In a recent case, however, her first pancakes proved more disastrous than all the green-hued soda biscuit ever baked by novices at the art.

A young stenographer, recently married, took her husband home to board with mamma. Mamma was a real cook, but the bride was not. However, she was an artist in frying pancakes, which she never ate herself because "the greasy things just upset her," she said.

A few days ago she prevailed upon her mother to permit her to make the coffee and "some nice pancakes" for her husband's breakfast. Daughter was given full possession of the kitchen so she could have all the credit. The bridegroom ate heartily of the pancakes; in fact, he managed to consume all his wife cooked.

"What were you doing with this can of plaster of paris in here?" asked the mother, an hour or so later.

"Can of what?" replied the bride, puzzled.

"Plaster of paris," said her mother. "What made you take that down from the shelf?"

By that time the young bride had bounded into the kitchen.

"Is that plaster of paris?" she shrieked, "it's in a baking-powder can. Why, I used that to bake dearie's pancakes. Heavens, he must be getting mummified by this time." And she promptly had hysterics.

Grabbing a scarf, the bride, now pale and excited, ran for the corner drug store.

"What's the antidote for plaster of paris?" she wailed at the clerk.

"Never heard of any," he replied. "You don't mean paris green, do you? Who's been eating it?"

"My husband. And the worst of it all is that I fed it to him, too."

"Brand-new husband, too," mused the pharmacist, sotto voce. "How much did he get of it?"

"Between a dessert and a tablespoonful, I think."

"Well, let him have it. It will not hurt him. You might give him an emetic."

The distressed wife got little consolation out of these instructions. She also could see that the druggist was amused —heartless, unfeeling wretch that he was. A brighter idea seized the bride, and she ran for the telephone.

"Dearie, you are filled with plaster of paris. Run for the doctor and get an emetic before it hardens in you," she shouted.

Of course the other end of the conversation could not be heard, but from the number of times she repeated her command it was plain to be seen that he was puzzled. Then she explained how she had fed the plaster to him. He said he was feeling fine, but she made him promise to run for a doctor instanter.

Si Whitaker—You don't mean to tell me Bige Waller went into bankruptcy?
Lem Hawz—He didn't went; he was pushed.

A Poor Guess.

"Well, well, Senator," exclaimed Silas Hoskins, who had just arrived in Washington, "this is fine. I've not been here half an hour before I have the good fortune to meet you. I'm delighted to see you looking so well."

"Thank you," replied Senator Mossingham, without showing any enthusiasm. He was half inclined to turn and flee up Capitol Hill, pretending to have forgotten something, but before he could make up his mind Mr. Hoskins had grasped his hand and was shaking it vigorously.

"I was hoping," the Senator's constituent said, "that I might have the good luck to see you down here, but I didn't expect that you were going to be almost the first man I should run across in Washington. How's Mrs. Mossingham?"

"Not very well, I'm sorry to say."

"That's too bad. I hope it is nothing serious?"

"We are hoping for the best."

"And how have you been? You never looked better in your life. Ah, Senator, some of our people have had a good deal to say recently about your being too old to represent us here much longer, but if they could see you today they'd change their minds. You look as young and vigorous as you did twenty years ago."

"It is good of you to say so, Mr. Hoskins. I am sorry that I have a pressing engagement and shall——"

"Oh, don't let me interfere with anything of that kind. I'll have plenty of chances to see you again. I'm going to be here several weeks. I've been retained as one of the counsel in an important case, and——"

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Senator Mossingham, grasping both of his constituent's hands, "you are going to have lunch with me. I have just remembered that my engagement was for tomorrow at this time. And you must come out to my house and see Mrs. Mossingham. She was feeling much better this morning, and, I have no doubt will be fully recovered by this time. I thought you were here after an office."

She Feared an Explosion.

A robust old woman in the mountains of north Georgia was ill for the first time her life and a doctor was sent for. Partly by persuasion and partly by force, the physician induced his patient to swallow some big quinine capsules—a simple enough operation, which, however, scared the old woman almost to death. She was soon able to sit up, and her daughter thought she would give the convalescent a treat. She took her mother's corncob pipe from the 'shelf' or mantel, filled it with tobacco, and picking up a live coal between two sticks, started with it toward the bed.

"Ma," she said brightly, "jes' look what I got fer ye."

The old woman saw the pipe and the live coal.

"Git away from me, Sary," she screamed in terror. "Take away dat fire! Take hit away! Don't yer know I's done plumb filled up wi' catridges?"

Homeward Bound.

Although the New York, judge felt constrained to impose a fine, the reason the prisoner gave for attempted theft enlisted the sympathy of the courtroom.

"I was homesick," he pleaded. "I stole to get money enough, to go home on."

Every man present had experienced homesickness himself at some time in his life, and out in the courtroom lobby they collected sufficient money to pay his fine and leave $10 over to take him home. With the balance in his pocket and a generous sympathizer in attendance to see him safely on his journey, the discouraged prisoner left the courtroom. In half an hour the atendant returned.

"By the way," said a contributor to the fund, "where did that fellow want to get to, anyhow? I never thought of it before."

The attendant glowered indignantly.

"Jersey City," he said.

The Weary Answer.

On one of the famous scenic routes of the West there is a brakeman who has lost the forefinger of his right hand.

His present assignment as rear-end brakeman on a passenger train places him in the observation car, where he is the target for an almost unending fusillade of questions from tourists, who insist upon having the name, and, if possible, the history of the mountains, the canons, and points of interest along the route.

One especially enthusiastic lady tourist had kept up the gatling fire of questions until she had thoroughly mastered the geography of the country. Then she ventured to ask the brakeman how he had lost his finger.

"Cut off in making a coupling between cars, I suppose?"

"No, madam; I wore that finger off pointing out scenery to tourists."

A Quick Answer.

Having done his best by every fair and unfair means during his last election to catch the candidate tripping, the heckler grew offensively personal.

"Is it true that your mother washes ——" he began, but before he could add the word "clothes," the witty candidate called out smartly:

"Of course, she does. Why, don't you?"

This raised a loud laugh at the heckler's expense, but still undaunted he returned to the attack.

"You can't deny," he said, "that your father was a rag and bone man. I bought some clothes of him thirty years ago."

"And I see you're still wearing them!" was the candidate's lightning retort.

There was no more heckling that night.

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The stands holding the clock up are also of brass, secure and very strong. In the back the winding and setting screws are well made and are large enough so that your fingers can reach them. The whole clock is designed to combine the best time keeping in the neatest and most compact form possible. But, above all—

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against defects, for this clock is thoroughly tested, examined and regulated before it leaves the factory, and if there are any defects in the material and workmanship, you can return it at once at our expense.

It will look well on your mantel-piece or on your table among your best things. Hour after hour, year after year it faithfully performs its duty of telling you the correct time.

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Spear Shows Pictures of Everything

It is so easy to trade with **Spear!** Just drop him a postal or mail the Coupon for the Big Spear Catalog. It comes right back in a hurry—Free to you—filled from cover to cover with an amazing array of wonderful bargains for your home—a vastly greater selection than you could probably get in the combined stocks of 100 average furniture stores. **Spear** shows you his wonderful assortment of Carpets, Rugs and Draperies in the colors, patterns and designs from photographs of the original goods. Just sit down quietly at home with your family at your side, if you choose, and select anything you want from this great Exposition of Household Bargains, including everything in

Furniture,	**Ranges,**	**Sewing Machines,**	**Mattresses, Bedding,**
Carpets,	**Refrigerators,**	**Washing Machines,**	**Springs,**
Rugs,	**Clocks,**	**Lace Curtains,**	**Silverware,**
Stoves,	**Dishes,**	**Portieres,**	**Go-Carts.**

Thousands of Spear Bargains

The **Spear System of Home Shopping** is the simplest, most enjoyable, satisfactory and economical way ever invented. **Spear's** Bargain Book shows splendid big pictures—actual likenesses of everything! You don't need to guess—there right before your eyes as plain as day, you can see every article you need for the home, with exact, complete and truthful descriptions that leave nothing to be desired. With the **Spear Catalog** before you, all sense of distance is lost—you feel that you are just as close to the **House of Spear,** as if you were actually to walk into his Mammoth Institution at Pittsburgh.

Spear Word Is Backed By $1,000,000

Remember, **Spear** must live up to every promise! You get it all in "black and white", before goods are shipped, and then if everything is not exactly as **Spear** says, you can return any article at his expense and get your money back. Can you do this with a store? **Spear's** guarantee of satisfaction is good, because it is backed by over $1,000,000 in cash assets and his reputation for fair and square dealing.

Your Credit Is Good With Spear

Spear Says, "Select what you need—pay when you like." Why deny yourself a beautiful home, furnished with every comfort, when the **Spear** System of Credit Shopping makes it so easy for you to have what you like and pay when most convenient?

Use your credit with **Spear.** No matter where you live, his liberal, open account, easy payment plan gives you every possible credit advantage enjoyed by the most favored and well-to-do customer of any city store. **Spear** trusts all honest people, everywhere, regardless of their income. He charges nothing extra for **Spear** credit, either—not a penny—so don't hesitate—just select what you want from the Mammoth **Spear** Bargain Book, paying for it as you please, without interest, and in small payments as convenient.

Spear Prices Are Lowest of Any

While **Spear's** credit terms are the most liberal in the country, yet his prices are the lowest. This is because **Spear** buys goods in such vast quantities that he secures better prices than would be possible to smaller concerns. By extending his business to hundreds of thousands of customers all over the country, he can afford to accept just one small added profit from each sale.

Spear of Pittsburgh allows no store or factory on earth to undersell him.

Those who take advantage of the **Spear** System of Credit Buying not only get the benefit of highest quality but also make an actual saving of from one-third to one-half on every order. That is why **Spear's** business is growing by such wonderful leaps and bounds.

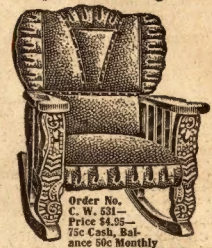
Spear Says—30 Days to Decide

Spear of Pittsburgh will ship anything you select from his wonderful Bargain Catalog on approval. You can keep the goods for a 30 day's home test. Then, if after a whole month you are not fully satisfied, return the goods at **Spear's** expense, and he will refund your money. You see **Spear's** idea is that his home furnishings must sell themselves to you after you have tried them for 30 days. Isn't that about the fairest way in the world to sell goods?

Send Spear YOUR Order Now

You needn't wait for **Spear's** Catalog. If you want a Rug, Set of Dishes, Go-Cart, Rocker or any of the articles shown on this page, just send **Spear** a trial order right now, and let him prove to you once and for all that no other concern in the country can possibly give you the wonderful values that he can. You have already heard of **Spear,** even though you have never yet done any shopping with him.

Big Rocker Bargain



Order No. C. W. 531—Price $4.95—75c Cash, Balance 50c Monthly

A large, roomy, comfortable, solid oak Rocker with high, wide back, fully tufted and buttoned. Seat is large and roomy, upholstered with high grade black Sylvan leather over full steel springs and beautiful ruffled edge to match back. Construction is solid golden oak throughout, with high gloss golden finish. Wide arms, front posts of handsome design.

A beautiful, high color Brussels Rug, red rose design, with either green or tan ground. Guaranteed full 9-wire Tapestry Brussels with wool facing. This is the greatest genuine Brussels Rug value you ever saw. It is perfectly safe to order direct from this, as we positively will refund your money if on receipt you are not perfectly satisfied. Mail the Coupon below today with $1.50 cash.

No. C. W. 4602—Size 9x12—Price $11.95—Balance 75c per Month

Spear's Library Table

No. C. W. 3774 Price $8.95—$1.50 Cash—75c a Month

This handsome, Colonial Design Library Table is guaranteed to please you or money back. Large, heavy, 28 x 42 inches; made of American quartered oak, fitted with drawer. Highly glossed finish. A splendid ornament.

No. C. W. 201—Price $11.65—$1.50 Cash, Balance 75c Month

This Handsome complete Metal Bed Outfit, consisting of heavy, perfectly constructed Iron Bed, any color, 4 feet 6 inches wide, a good woven wire spring with coil supports; 50-pound cotton top mattress & pillows.

Spear's Famous New 'Special Plymouth' Range

No. C2601—Price 19.95, Without Reservoir
No. C2600—Price $23.95, With Reservoir
Cash $3.00—$1.50 Per Month

This is the great range that has caused such a sensation as the most amazing bargain ever offered. Easily worth $35. Yet our price is only $23.95 (without reservoir $19.95).

It is a masterpiece in construction. Every feature is complete and perfect. Oven is of same proportions and construction features found in very highest priced ranges. A very small deposit sets this famous bargain in your kitchen for free 30 days test. If it don't give absolute service, we refund your money.

Spear's New Semi-Collapsible Go-Cart

No. CW-118—Price $4.75, 75c Cash, 50c Month

Frame made of best steel, nicely finished. Leatherette covering, comes in dark green. Cart is full size. Has 10-inch wheels, heavy rubber tires. When folded it may run on two wheels, if desired, instead of carrying.

Spear's 55-Piece Dinner Set

No. C-2930—Price $5.65, 75c Cash, 50c Month

The high quality, exquisite shape, dainty art decorations and low price of this magnificent Dinner Set have made it one of our most popular offerings. Decorations are in pure gold in continuous border effect, wonderfully pleasing and effective. This set is made in our West Virginia Pottery, which is conceded to be the largest, most modern in the world.

"Steinway Special" Sewing Machine

Guaranteed 10 Years — Price $18.45

Fitted with a High Arm Improved Drop Head, Ball Bearing Iron Stand, Beautifully Carved Quartered Oak Case, highly glossed. Automatic Lift Head—Dust Proof Case. Full equipment of steel attachments and accessories. This High-Class Steinway Special Sewing Machine is guaranteed perfect in material, workmanship and operation.

No. C.W. 3210—$3 Cash, $1.25 Per Month

30 Days' Free Trial.

Wonderful Unfold Davenport

No. C-1521—Price (including Mattress) $26.55, $4.50 Cash, $2.00 Per Month

Beyond question the greatest Bed Davenport ever offered by anyone at the price. Two useful articles in one—a full size, comfortable bed and a beautiful, luxurious davenport. Of solid quartered, golden finished oak or northern birch, mahogany finished. Upholstered over full steel coil springs in our celebrated imperial leather. A truly wonderful bargain! Money back if not absolutely satisfactory on a 30 days' free trial.

How To Use Spear Coupons

Remember, it will be perfectly safe for you to order any article shown above direct from this announcement, as you have the privilege of returning the goods at any time within 30 days, and your money will be refunded if everything is not perfectly satisfactory. If you wish to order right now, without waiting for Spear's Mammoth Bargain Catalog, just fill out carefully and mail the Order Coupon on left, with remittance for first cash payment by Draft, Money Order or Registered Currency. If you do not wish to order now, but simply want Catalog only, mail Coupon on right.

Spear & Company
Dept. T4
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Mail Your Order On This Coupon

SPEAR & CO., Dept. T4, Pittsburgh, Pa.

I enclose herewith $.....to apply as first payment on.....
(Give Name and No. of Article)

I agree to pay balance of $.....at rate of $..... per month. It is understood that I am to have the privilege of returning the goods at any time within 30 days from date of shipment and you agree to refund the money paid and also freight charges both ways if I am not perfectly satisfied with them.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Mail This Coupon For Catalog

SPEAR & CO., Dept. T4, Pittsburgh, Pa.

I have read about the Wonderful Spear Bargains in Home Furnishings, and I would like to know all about the Spear Open Account, Easy Payment Plan. Please send me your Mammoth Free Catalog, Prices, Terms, etc., without the slightest obligation on my part.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....